



# Retrospect

Denton County  
Historical  
Commission

SUMMER  
June, 2015

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## Plows and Cows: Farming and Ranching the Foundation of Denton County's Early Success

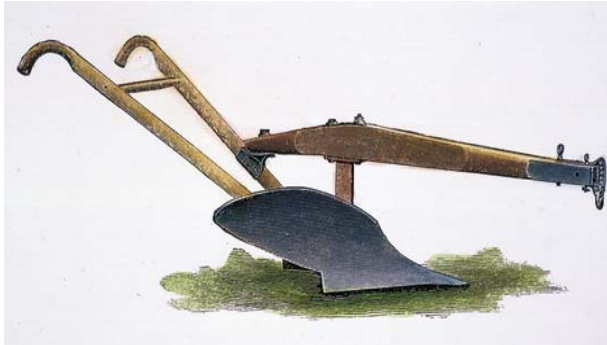


Photo: [www.agriculturalrev.weebly.com](http://www.agriculturalrev.weebly.com)



Photo: DJ Taylor

It was in 1837 that a blacksmith in the village of Grand Detour, Illinois, took a broken saw blade from a local sawmill to his shop. The blade could not be fixed but the blacksmith knew one thing for certain about the polished steel, a type uncommon on the prairies of the mid-west: the black clay soil would not stick to it. Using his skills and an idea to curve the shape of a blade, the blacksmith, John Deere, created a so-called "self-cleaning" plow that was quite different from the cast-iron ones then in use.

Eventually, every farmer wanted one of the plows that could handle the soils of America's prairies with ease; providing a major advance in agriculture.

The era of the improved plow arrived just as the Republic of Texas opened up land in what became known as "The Peters Colony." The draw of almost free land—and a landscape with few trees—led to the settlement of the open vast prairies in North Texas that would include the

future Denton County.

Farmers and stock raisers (cattle and horses) along with a few merchants and a handful of professional men show up in the 1860 United States Census for Denton County. The first two occupations would predominate over the next 100 years as the county took advantage of the coming of the railroads to forge a reputation as one of the prime agricultural centers of Texas.

In this edition of *Retrospect* we will take a few looks at Denton County's agricultural history and successes. Over the past 50 years or so we have seen huge population increases and the rural aspect of our county continues to retreat north and west as more residential communities are built. We encourage you to take a drive through our remaining rural areas and document bits of our fading and endangered farming and ranching history. Let's not forget the foundations on which our beloved Denton County was built.

We invite you in for a look back.

**TRIVIA:** At the right is a segment from an 1852 map of the Peter's Colony by its agent, Henry O. Hedgecoxe. The figure labeled as "Smith's Mountan" (sp.) is a county landmark more commonly known as...

(See page 5 for the answer)



A Message From Our County Chair, Dr. Charlotte Moonzyham—

# Paradox of Different Trails

Even when trips are carefully planned, unknown variables may lead to surprising destinations by way of unpredictable paths. Mary Alice Wilson Shepherd, my grandmother, pictured in the center below and my dad, Jack Shepherd, the youngest on the left in short pants, were descendants of some of the first settlers in Denton and Collin County. Jeremiah Wilson, the Texas patriarch arrived in Collin County in 1845. Jeremiah's youngest son was born in Texas, still a republic. There were only 150 to 200 settlers in Collin County at the time. Aubrey Texas in Denton County became the permanent home of the Wilson family. Jack was born on the Wilson Place in 1911; the oldest sister was born in 1889. The family prospered. Mom, Mary Alice, did not inherit land as did her brothers. Tenant farming was the surprise turn her path took after marrying William Nelson Shepherd in 1888.



My husband is a voting member of the Choctaw Nation. His paternal third great grandfather, Pehelichee, and maternal third great grandmother, Anthletuna, walked the Trail of Tears from Mississippi to Oklahoma, United States Territory. My husband, Charlie Mooneyham, now lives in Aubrey. His unpredicted path led to Denton County, named for John B. Denton, ironically an Indian fighter.

Denton County is home to many diverse cultures and many interesting stories. The county is one of the best places to live; always improving and continuing to move closer to the ideal of

21<sup>st</sup> Century Texans. Art, history, and academics are fostered. Musicians here are exceptional.

Denton County is home to two universities and the economy strong. The Denton County Historic Commission helps to tell the past stories of Denton while interpreting the present, to help shape the future. Our family, for generations has been blessed to live in Denton County where all paths lead to improvement, welcoming the new, respecting the old.

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Contact us: DJ Taylor (940) 368-1816 or email: [djtaylor@centurylink.net](mailto:djtaylor@centurylink.net)

## Volunteers Work Getting Cemeteries Ready



Collette Johnson and Harold Jackson of the Southeast Denton Neighborhood Association joined others this spring in cleaning the cemeteries at Harrington-Cassady-Clark. Photo by Peggy Riddle



## Large Crowd for Marker Dedication at Harrington-Cassady-Clark Cemeteries

On May 2, a sunny, bright Saturday morning, approximately 100 folks turned out for the dedication of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) marker for the historically African-American Harrington-Cassady-Clark Cemeteries near the former Lloyd community in eastern Denton County. Among those in attendance were descendants of those buried in the Clark Cemetery.

Denton County Historical Commission (DCHC) chair Charlotte Mooneyham welcomed the crowd after the meeting was opened by Beth Stribling, DCHC Marker Committee chair. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Eagle Scout candidate Tristan Allen of Troop 6 and a prayer was offered by County Commissioner, Precinct 3, Bobbie J. Mitchell.

Following the recognition of special guests by County Judge Mary Horn, Chris Florence, Division Director of the THC's Public Information and Education Division, spoke about the significance of the "Undertold Story" marker, a designation that recognizes important parts of our history that have been inadequately noted. The awards are very limited and the selection of these cemeteries for the award is an important accomplishment for Denton County and its citizens.



**Above L-R: Precinct 1 Commissioner Hugh Coleman; Precinct 4 Commissioner Andy Eads; Historical Narrative author Chelsea Stallings; County Judge Mary Horn; Precinct 3 Commissioner Bobbie J. Mitchell; and DCHC Marker Chair Beth Stribling at the dedication of the Texas Historical Commission marker for the Harrington-Cassady-Clark Cemeteries.**

*Photo: Jane Hardman Flynn*

A resolution honoring the cemeteries was presented by Pat Fallon, Texas State Representative, District 106, on behalf of Texas Legislature, and a Certificate of Recognition on behalf of U. S. Congressman Michael C. Burgess was presented by Megan Everett, the congressman's Outreach Coordinator.

Certificates of appreciation were given to the Denton County Commissioners Court for their leadership efforts in preserving the cemeteries and to Chelsea Stallings who wrote the historical narrative for the marker.

County Commissioner Hugh Coleman, Precinct 1, presented certificates of commendation to those whose efforts contributed to the cleaning and preserving of the cemeteries, including the Southeast Denton Neighborhood Association and Scouts Tristan Allen and Chris Green.

In her narrative and in her remarks, Chelsea Stallings recalled the life faced by African-Americans in a post-Civil War North Texas and their struggle to become landowners and successful farmers.

Harrington Cemetery is in its original location. The Cassady Cemetery, originally southeast of Lake Dallas, and the Clark Cemetery that was originally in Hickory Creek, were relocated when the Corps of Engineers built the Garza-Little Elm Reservoir (now Lewisville Lake) in the early 1950s.

—DJT



**Above, front, L-R: Scout Chris Green, Southeast Denton Neighborhood President Colette Johnson & Scout Tristan Allen were presented Certificates of Commendation. Back, L-R are DCHC Chair Charlotte Mooneyham, Precinct 1 Commissioner Hugh Coleman & County Judge Mary Horn.**

*Photo: Jane Hardman Flynn*

# Of Dirt & Toil: Building Blocks of Denton County

Ed. F. Bates, in his *History and Reminiscences of Denton County*, writes of the county's first settlers, mostly poor, coming in ox-wagons and two-horse wagons seeking a place to call their own and to succeed at surviving off the virgin land of the North Texas prairie.

In the Bates' book, T. R. Allen of Justin writes about arriving in Denton County in 1847: "Here we found the country which had been most wonderfully blessed by the great Architect of Nature, a soil as rich as the craving of man could wish for, and timber, water, and grass in abundance...with wild deer and turkey, and fine herds of antelope on the prairies year round..." Allen adds, "The only question was where our bread would come from until virgin soil could be prepared and made to supply our wants."

The first order of business for the pioneer was to stake out his claim for either 320 acres (for a single man) or 640 acres (for a married man). Next was to set about tilling the soil and hoping that the seeds promised by the Peters Colony office were available. To achieve this second task of turning the earth, oxen or horses were hitched to a plow and the settler walked behind as the earth was turned.

Even though the first residents of the county arrived a few years after John Deere invented his prairie plow, it is doubtful if any owned one of the steel models. Bates writes that the first plows were of a wooden variety with a wooden mould board and those sufficed until blacksmiths arrived and used steel to form a mould board for what became known as a "Cary plow." Cattle, hogs, sheep and horses; in that order, were the livestock basics in the early days. By 1860 the county had approximately 36,000 head of cattle, 11,633 sheep and 4,222 horses. An unknown number of hogs ran wild. Most of the cattle and horses were on the open range in the western part of the county.



Photo: IGN.com

cultural markets began to reshape not only the mindsets but the destinies of Denton County farmers and ranchers.

In 1881 the Dallas & Wichita became the Missouri, Kansas & Texas and finally reached Denton to merge with the Texas & Pacific as it arrived from Fort Worth. The two railway enterprises were owned by the same concern headed by Jay Gould and their merged tracks built north to join others at Denison. In 1886 the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe built through the "wheat belt" of western Denton County and the county soon blossomed as an agricultural hotbed.

With the coming of the railroads farmers rushed to plant more cash crops. Cotton and wheat began to dominate the landscape as gins, mills and elevators sprang up along the railroad tracks in every town along the lines.

The markets brought more cash into the county and with that merchants were able to sell more goods. The resulting windfall for the store owners was soon followed by their investing in the land and leasing out the farms or hiring tenant farmers to work the land. Names long associated with business enterprises, Smoot, Baines, Abney, Evers, Rayzor and Craft to name a few, all had a number of farms under their ownership.

In the 1880s some of the county leaders and investors took a look around at the acres of untilled land and decided that an Immigration Society was need to recruit land buyers to farm this "underutilized" land. As the enthusiasm grew and the society formed, Judge J. A. Carroll advised the troops to be sure to recruit "only those of the highest character" lest the jails overflow.

**See "Farming" on Page 5**



**ABOVE: Dillard & Curt Taylor plow with a steam tractor west of Argyle, ca. 1915.**

Photo courtesy of Don Gray

The earliest crops were corn, oats and wheat; cotton not becoming widespread until after 1868. Most farming was of a subsistence base. Markets for farm commodities were mostly to the states back east and transportation was extremely limited in those days since there were no railroads. The steamboats did ply the river up to Jefferson but that was over a hundred miles away. When the Dallas & Wichita Railway reached the county south of Lewisville in 1878, the promise of new agri-



**ABOVE: A threshing machine & crew, early 20th century.**

Photo: Portal to Texas History/crediting source to Hardin-Simmons University



## Farming continued from page 4

Farming changed over the years since the original settler first walked a plow behind a single horse. The “sulky plow” came into popularity in the late 1870s; the farmer could now ride seated atop the plow. The plows began to add blades so that more than one row could be plowed at a time. This also led to additional horses being added to the task of pulling the ever larger plow. By the time the six-bottom plow was introduced, it was too big to be pulled by a team of horses.

To pull the larger plows, steam tractors were introduced. They required two men to operate—one for the engine and one to mind the plow. These small-scale locomotives with wide steel wheels were only effective on relatively level ground; any incline of note would “unbalance” the water supply and could lead to problems, including an explosion.

The steam tractors were an integral part of the threshing process for grains. The engine with its attached flywheel connected to the threshing machine via a long belt (to keep the tractors engine from igniting the dry straw) to separate the grain from the chaff. Operations were not without danger. In the July 27, 1892, edition of the *Denton County News* is an item about the threshing machine of a Mr. Dodson catching fire on the C. C. Leuty farm at Justin. The fire resulted in the destruction of the “separator, straw carrier, two wagons, a pair of fine harness and 25 bushels of wheat.” The importance of a competent steam engine operator is noted in a *Dallas Morning News* report from July 26, 1897, of an explosion of the Horton brothers’ steam engine at the Litsey farm near Argyle. The report states that the operator had been warned to keep a close watch on the pressure gauge. His failure to do so and the resulting explosion killed the operator, S. J. Puffer, and another worker, H. Dunham. Several other workers at the farm experienced severe injuries from the flying metal and boiling water.

By the 1890s there was a move to make farms more diversified (see the adjacent side panel about A. J. Nance) and the call to plant less cotton and to plant more grain crops; wheat in particular was in vogue. It was also during this time that the Denton County Blooded Stock and Fair reached its peak during the earliest incarnation of the fair that eventually evolved into the Denton County Fair/North Texas State Fair & Rodeo. In addition to horse races and livestock judging, individual farms brought displays in hopes of winning the title of “Best Farm” at these early fairs.

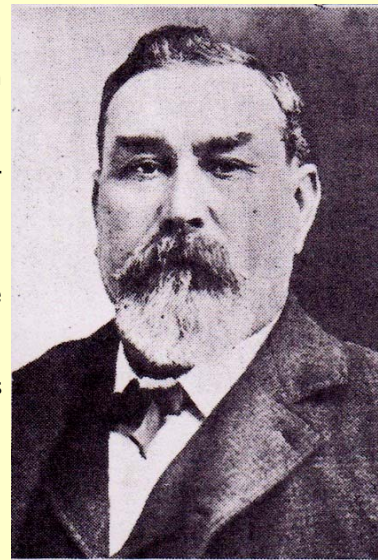
Farms continued to dominate throughout the first half of Denton County’s 20<sup>th</sup> century. It wasn’t until 1950 that the population of the county’s towns (21,373) finally surpassed that of the rural areas (19,992). While the rural population dropped, the size of the farms increased as the economies of scale played a part in the rural exodus as did job opportunities in the cities, post World War II.

Another factor in the demise of the Denton County farm has been the pressure of population growth and homebuilding. As the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area expands, land prices increase. Lucrative offers for land make it hard for a farmer to refuse a buyers offer. The tide of rooftops from the county lines with Dallas and Tarrant push ever northward. The wheat, oat, corn and cotton fields of yesteryear disappear as concrete covers the once rich prairie soil that fed the enterprise that first brought sustenance, comfort and eventually profits to Denton County’s agricultural forbearers.

—DJ Taylor

## Bolivar’s Squire Nance Believed Diversified Farming the Key to Success

Squire A. J. Nance of Bolivar was one of Denton County’s most prominent figures in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup>. In addition to being a successful farmer, he was one of the founders of the Denton County National Bank as well as a founder of the Sanger National Bank, the Sanger Milling Company. He also served as Denton County Commis-



**Andrew Jackson Nance**

sioner, Precinct 4, from 1869 until 1890.

From the September 15, 1898, edition of the *Dallas Morning News*, in a report from the Denton County Fair, Nance is lauded for his diversification of crops and self-sufficiency. The A. J. Nance Farm won the prize for “Individual Farm Exhibit” besting exhibits by runners-up J. B. Stogner, H. Smoot and W. E. May. The paper reports:

*“One exhibit in particular, which for completeness and good arrangement deserves especial mention, is the farm of Squire A. J. Nance of Bolivar. The exhibit is a fine illustration of The News’ idea on diversification of crops and everything in it was grown on Squire Nance’s farm. In it are fine specimens of corn, oats, wheat, popcorn, roasting ears, peaches, apples and all kinds of fruits, molasses, beets, ham, bacon, chickens, potatoes and even maple syrup: in a word everything almost that can be grown in Texas...Any family could live and have a variety of good things every day in the year from the products of that one farm.”*

The following February, the paper spoke with Nance who extolled the benefits of raising only registered stock—“Durham and Jersey cattle, Hambletonian horses, Berkshire hogs, Plymouth Rock chickens” on his 1100 acre Duck Creek farm. It is also noted that Nance raises no cotton, although some of his tenants did. “He regards cotton at present prices in about the same light that he does razorback hogs, Texas ponies and steers and feather-legged chickens, all of which on the Duck Creek farm are articles strictly tabooed.”

—DJ Taylor

**Trivia Answer:** “Smith’s Mountain” is now known as “Pilot Knob”—the Woodbine outlier along the west side of I-35W, south of FM 2449. The Ranger Station is noted on the map just north and slightly east. Interestingly, today’s Interstate closely follows the old Ranger trail.

# Head'm Up & Move'm Out: Ranching & Trail Drives Brought Needed Cash to Post-Civil War Denton County

For those born in the first 75 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, growing up on a steady diet of Saturday cowboy picture shows and, later, a flood of westerns on television, the American cowboy is the stuff of legend. Yet, when myth is stripped away and the images of Tom Mix, John Wayne and James Arness put aside, there remains the reality of the Old West.

The day of the cattleman, and horsemen, too, was a vital part of the early financial success of Denton County. Charles and John Medlin; George and Dave Light; William Crow Wright; Jeremiah and Burk Burnett; John Paine; John Chisum; and Ed Forrester are among the names found in the early day records of the horse and cattle business in Denton County.

The unfenced and wide open spaces of western and northern Denton County, virtually treeless in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, largely unsettled and with good native grasses, was almost custom made for the cattleman and the horse breeder. Herds were allowed to roam free and



**John Chisum** Photo: Wikipedia.org

graze anywhere on the open range. Every year brought another round of new calves and ponies and the herds grew rapidly across the whole of North Texas. It is said that John Chisum, from his home on Clear Creek near Bolivar where he originally owned only 160 acres, had herds of cattle scattered across at least five counties up to the Red River. When Chisum left Denton County for the San Angelo area in 1864, he took over 100,000 head of cattle and left 30,000 in Denton County that he came back for later. There was a great deal of confusion about

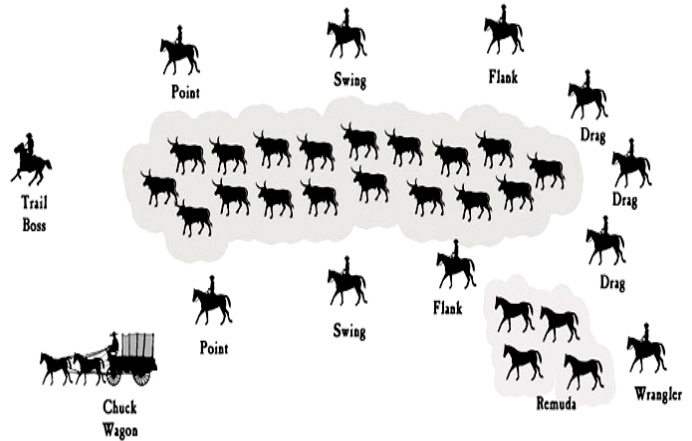
John Chisum's association with the Chisholm Trail. The sound-alike names caused many to assume he was the one for whom the trail was named. But the only trail he truly blazed, other than the one to San Angelo, was one from Denton County to Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1862, when he delivered a herd of cattle to the Confederate forces. After his relocation to the San Angelo area, Chisum sold beef to the Union garrison at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, according to Glen Sample Ely in his essay, *Gone from Texas and Trading with the Enemy: New Perspectives on Civil War West Texas*.

As noted above regarding Chisum's original 160 acres (he did eventually own or co-own about 500 acres, including some he bought in partnership with John Orr, great-great uncle of DCHC Chair, Charlotte Mooneyham) ranches in the early days did not require large amounts of land. Much of the land to the west was unsettled and in the absence of fences the herds could roam at will.

The cattle market that evolved after 1865 when the Civil War ended provided a boom for Denton County ranchers. The railroads had not yet arrived and the nearest railhead was in Kansas. "The Trail" as the drovers called it drew its many branches to the "Red River Crossing" north of Ringgold, Texas. From there it went almost due north across the Indian Territory into Kansas where buyers with ready cash awaited to transport the cattle via rail to northern markets.

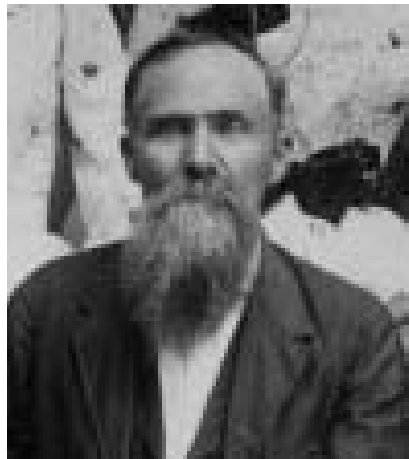
The Trail, or Chisholm Trail as it is better known, traversed the length of Denton County from south to north. It entered the county near the old community of Elizabeth (or Elizabethtown in some rec-

ords) near today's Alliance Airport. It proceeded north to west of Bolivar, crossing out of the county near Slidell. The trail drives started north in the spring when the grass was green. As the herd grazed its way north, subsequent herds over the trail might move slightly to the east or west for better grazing. An area a mile or more wide might be able to stake a claim to being a part of the Chisholm Trail.



A trail drive usually required a dozen or more men; three on each side and three in back plus a wrangler for a remuda of horses as well as the trail boss and chuckwagon cook. The latter two had the luxury of riding at the head of the herd and largely avoided most of the dust kicked up by the cattle. The three in back, riding drag, were usually the least experienced or newest to the trail drive and thus got the worst job. Storms that scattered a herd, stampedes, dealing with Native Americans and the danger of murderous thieves made it a dangerous way to earn a living and many died along the trail.

In 1868, a group of Kiowa and Comanche horsemen crossed out of the Indian Territory into Denton County, making off with over 1,000 horses. Many of those belonged to William Crow Wright who lived just south of Bolivar at the time. Wright would eventually file suit in federal court against the United States government to recoup his monetary losses, reasoning that the U. S. Army had failed to keep the two tribes in Indian Territory. The suit went on for a few years before Wright lost on appeal and quit the case. William Crow Wright would later move to Denton and build his family home, known as "Boscobel"



**William Crow Wright** Photo: Denton Public Library/Portal to Texas History

on West Oak Street. He also obtained the bricks from the 1876 Courthouse when it was torn down and used them to build the Wright Opera House on the northeast angle of the Denton Square (now the home of Recycled Books). Just west of Bolivar was the Forrester Ranch with another large herd of horses. While most horse raisers' stock was of the Spanish or mustang pony, Ed Forrester raised only horses of the eastern thoroughbred variety. See "Ranching" on p.7

## Ranching, continued from page 6

Jeremiah Burnett arrived west of Ponder in the mid-1850s and settled on Denton Creek. His new enterprise as stock raiser was passed on to his son, Samuel Burk Burnett. Burk Burnett, as he became known, bought a herd of cows bearing the brand, "6666." He decided that was a fitting title for a ranch and after he left Denton County, settled on ranch lands around Wichita Falls. The town of Burkburnett is named for him. His land holdings and fame grew during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He was a friend and confidant of President Theodore Roosevelt, who visited his ranch for a wolf hunt in 1905.

The Light brothers held extensive holdings east of Pilot



Burk Burnett Photo: Acestry.com

Point in the northeastern corner of Denton County. The Medlin family's holdings extended from Southlake to Trophy Club, Roanoke and western Flower Mound. Sam Reynolds ranched in the southwestern part of the county near Justin. The Barnett family ranched in the Plainview area west of Krum. These families and others, through their cattle and/or horse businesses, brought money into the county that led to the creation of banks that financed other businesses. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would see other ranchers rising in the county, including John Paine of the Pilot Knob Ranch and Tom Cole just to his north.

As time passed by, the ranches became more compact but with higher acreages. The coming of barbed wire allowed farmers to fence out the free-ranging cattle and horses, making it necessary for a rancher to own more land to provide grass for his herds. At almost the same time (1880s) the railroads arrived making it easier to ship cattle from Denton County without having to trail them to a railhead several hundred miles north.

Today, ranches still exist in parts of Denton County. In addition to traditional ranches, many raise quarter horses, cutting horses and even a few thoroughbreds; mostly in the Aubrey/Pilot Point area. As the Fort Worth area expands, the ranches of Denton County retreat northward. The heritage of our ranching past will stay with us; it wasn't exactly John Wayne's shoot'em up Old West, but it was colorful.

—DJ Taylor

## TRACKING THE HISTORICAL MARKER PROCESS FOR CASSADY, CLARK AND HARRINGTON CEMETERIES

By Beth Stribling

How joyful it is to find out about something that occurred in the 1870s – and even more so when you actually can experience what you have just learned. Simply put, a historical cemetery can make you stand still and be quiet long enough to capture the sense of serenity that pervades throughout the trees, the old wire fence, the clusters of iris surrounding the graves, and yes, the graves.

This is exactly the way the story began for a small group of Denton County Historical Commission (DCHC) Marker Committee members when we first learned about the Harrington, Cassady and Clark Cemeteries. A nearby land owner, Gretchen Benolken, had contacted Judge Mary Horn to see if one of her tenants could clean the cemeteries. Research began at the behest of Judge Horn when she asked for a review of the cemeteries and learned that two of them belonged to the County.

By the time we learned of these three cemeteries we had a historical brief about these three African-American cemeteries located between Oak Grove and Little Elm in eastern Denton County. Cassady and Clark were reinterred in 1953 when the Garza-Little Elm Dam and Reservoir were constructed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers. Harrington Cemetery had been at the site since the 1870s.

A great deal of information has been released, printed and discussed on these three African-American cemeteries – so by now, this topic is a very familiar topic. I would like for you to know the behind-the-scenes work done by DCHC marker committee that led to the historical marker dedication ceremony on May 2, 2015.

On March 11, 2011, DJ Taylor, Dee Wooten, Gary Cook, Gary Lewis, Millard Heath, Bill Coleman and I met at the cemeteries and completed all of the on-site part of the Texas Historical Commission (THC) Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC) applications for the three cemeteries. After the field work day, research for deed records and other documentation

continued by the committee. Our thanks to Denton County staff Gary Cook, Gary Lewis and Rachel Crowe for their extraordinary work in providing maps, assisting with deed research, surveying the cemetery boundaries, photos, etc.; Gary Cook and Rachel Crowe are also members of the marker committee.

By May we had submitted the three HTC applications to THC. Each included a historical narrative with documentation, deed records, maps of the cemeteries and area, photos, etc. In July we received word that the applications were approved. By filing the declaration and map at the Denton County Clerk's office in the deed records, the HTC designations were complete for the three historic cemeteries; a requirement that had to be met before applying for a historical marker.

To obtain a marker for the cemeteries funding was needed. In 2012, we submitted an Undertold Story request to THC to fund a single marker for the three cemeteries. We were not selected. In May 2013 we again submitted an Undertold Story application. This time we were selected—one of 14 out of approximately 80 applications selected in the state. The marker value was \$1900.

Chelsea Stallings, a graduate student and part time staff at the Office of History and Culture, committed to using the collected research, doing further research, and writing the required narrative. Additional research focused on the people who were buried in the cemeteries. Chelsea's narrative was well written and very comprehensive. It was submitted to THC in the fall of 2013.

By October 2014, we had received a marker inscription from THC. We reviewed and requested changes in the inscription. After two changes the inscription was approved on October 6, 2014. The marker was delivered in December 2014, and a marker dedication was set for May 2, 2015. It was a beautiful, bright and joyous day with over 100 people attending the dedication and celebration; a satisfying and rewarding ending for all that began back in 2011.



# White Lilacs Tour Brings Quakertown Story to Students



*Billie Mohair and Alma Clark discuss life in Quakertown. Billie Mohair remembers as a girl playing on the porch of the Quakertown House, which is now located at the Denton County Historical Park.*

The Office of History and Culture's newest school tour springs from Carolyn Meyer's historical fiction novel, *White Lilacs*. The story and the characters of *White Lilacs* are based on the residents of Denton's Quakertown community. This tour provides teachers and students with an enhanced experience of understanding the local history on which the book is based.

The students tour an original Quakertown house located at the Denton County Historical Park and learn more about the residents of that community, students also take a bus tour through Southeast Denton to see where the original community

and its residents were relocated. Students also stop to see the Quakertown Park which was dedicated to the community and view the historical marker and the sculpted mural at the Denton Civic Center.

Since its debut at the end of April, several school groups have participated in the *White Lilacs* tours, including students from Plano, Sanger, and Denton. After the first tour received attention from an article in the *Denton Record Chronicle*, the OHC received a letter from author Carolyn Meyer expressing her praise and delight at the success of the *White Lilac* Tours.

*Kelsey Jistel, Office of History & Culture*



*Marilyn Stevens teaches the students about life at the Bayless-Selby House.*

## Denton County Local History Showcase Opening August 2015!

The newest exhibit at the Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum is The Denton County Local History Showcase, featuring displays from the historical societies and organizations of Krum, Aubrey, Pilot Point, Sanger, Roanoke and The Colony.

This exhibit is an opportunity to recognize these organizations across Denton County, as well as an opportunity to share their stories and collections. Several of these organizations have their own museums and continue to build on their growing collections and displays. Others plan to open in the fall or early 2016 —OHC

## The Office of History and Culture to Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15<sup>th</sup> marks the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month, and the Office of History and Culture will be celebrating with a new exhibit, located on the third floor of the Courthouse-On-Square, and several events to coincide. The Office of History and Culture is partnering with the Denton chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and LULAC chapter at the University of North Texas. The exhibit and events will take place September 15 – October 15 highlighting the history and culture of Hispanics living in the Denton area. —OHC



# History & Culture Volunteers Honored at Picnic



**County Commissioner Andy Eads, Volunteer Coordinator Gretel L'Heureux, Paul McCoig, County Judge Mary Horn, and County Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell at the OHC Volunteer Appreciation Picnic.**

On April 21<sup>st</sup>, the Office of History and Culture held a Volunteer Appreciation picnic to celebrate their volunteers' hard work and dedication to the museum and its educational programs. The total number of volunteer hours for this year was 3,892! This year several volun-

teers became members of the "100 Club," which recognizes those with over 100 hours of service. Paul McCoig received the Volunteer of the Year award for his many hours of dedication to the Courthouse Museum and the Historical Park. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please contact Gretel L'Heureux, Education and Tourism Coordinator, at (940) 349-2854 or [Gretel.L'Heureux@dentoncounty.com](mailto:Gretel.L'Heureux@dentoncounty.com).

## Congratulations to the OHC's 100 Club!

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| Janet Latham    | Holly Berry Guest |
| Paul McCoig     | Bill James        |
| Marilyn Stevens | Lloyd Webb        |
| Darien Orr      | Effie McQueen     |
| Johnny Guest    | John Mahoney      |
| Alan Schiegg    | Shaun Treat       |

—Office of History & Culture

## Denton County Heritage Business Program

On Tuesday May 12<sup>th</sup> the Denton County Office of History and Culture, in honor of National Historic Preservation Month, launched a new program to promote longstanding businesses throughout the county. Through this program, businesses across Denton County in operation for over 50 years will be recognized as "Denton County Heritage Businesses," and be presented with a sticker decal to display at their business. The purpose of this project is to bring awareness of these legacy Denton County businesses and to foster a relationship that encourages the donation of their business archives to Denton County.

The inaugural businesses included the Pilot Point Post-Signal, ACME Brick, Huffines Auto Group, Lakeview Marina, The Ranchman's Café, and Davis Purity Bakery, Inc.

Each month the OHC plans to recognize five more Heritage Businesses with a resolution in Commissioners Court.

If you know of a longstanding business within Denton County please call or email our Museum Services Coordinator, Kelsey Jistel, at 940-349-2850 or

[Kelsey.Jistel@dentoncounty.com](mailto:Kelsey.Jistel@dentoncounty.com)



**Denton County Heritage Business decal**

## Dr. William C. McCormick Medical Collection Exhibit Opened June 2

On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Office of History and Culture opened a new permanent exhibit featuring the McCormick Medical Collection on the second floor of the Bayless-Selby House at the Denton County Historical Park.

William C. McCormick, M. D. practiced medicine in Denton from 1962 until his death in 1999. Dr. McCormick received his bachelor's and master's degrees from North Texas State University and his medical degree from the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. After serving several United States Air Force medical facilities, Dr. McCormick moved to Denton and opened his private practice in Internal Medicine in 1962. In 1995 he became Medical Director of Denton's Flow Senior Health Center. Dr. McCormick began collecting vintage medical equipment in 1962. His medical artifacts came as gifts from patients and their families, from his fellow physicians, and from his own purchases.

The collection is on loan from Glenda McCormick, Dr. McCormick's widow. "The McCormick family is so proud to share this collection not only with the Denton County Museum, but also with everyone who visits. Bill was born in Denton and grew up here so it certainly seems appropriate that his medical collection should be shared here," said Mrs. McCormick. The collection had previously been displayed at the Denton Regional Medical Center.

—OHC



**ABOVE:** Family members of Dr. William C. McCormick look on as the ribbon is cut by his widow, Glenda McCormick; his son, Alan McCormick; and County Judge Mary Horn, opening the exhibit of Dr. McCormick's collection of vintage medical equipment at the Bayless-Selby House Museum. Photo: Joe Duncan, OHC

**BELOW:** Visitors examine part of the Dr. William C. McCormick Collection of vintage medical equipment at the Bayless-Selby House Museum in the Denton County Historical Park.



Photo: Joe Duncan, OHC

## "This Building Has a History" Program Launch, Beth Marie's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Parlor



**R-L:** Margaret Rich; Bob Moses, Beth Marie's co-owner; Charlotte Mooneyham, DCHC Chair; and Randy Hunt, DCHC member.

Photo: Peggy Riddle. OHC

*In nothing do men more nearly approach the gods than in giving health to men. ~Cicero*



## Chuckwagon Or Cook Shack: What's the Difference?

Any conversation about the Chisholm Trail, or cattle drives in general, inevitably leads to a mention of the chuckwagon.

On the early cattle drives some had the cowboys carry their own food supply in a sack and were individually responsible for feeding themselves. Other drives gave the responsibility for meals to one individual, more often than not a cowboy of advanced age who had learned something (one hoped) about cooking over the years. Again, the food was carried in bags strapped to the back of pack horses or more often, pack mules. Some outfits elected to use farm wagons (actually surplus military wagons) for transporting the food supply.



**Above: chuckwagons fed the cattle drive cowboys.** Photo: Stargazer.com

The first chuckwagon is usually credited to famed Texas rancher Charles Goodnight, who in 1866, added a "chuck box" to the rear of an army-surplus Studebaker wagon for a cattle drive into New Mexico. The box had shelves and drawers to accommodate cooking utensils and supplies with a bottom-hinged door that could be used for a work table. Other supplies and gear belonging to the cowboys was kept inside the wagon. A wooden keg mounted to the side of the wagon carried a water supply and a canvas "boot" under the wagon

could carry a load of firewood on the journey across the plains where firewood was in short supply. A canvas fly was added later to provide shade or a small amount of refuge during rain.

Not long after the trail drives came to an end, the harvesting or threshing operations brought forth a similar vehicle for providing food to a working crew: the cook shack. A cook shack was somewhat less mobile than a chuckwagon; it usually remained at a set location on a farm while the harvest took place. The appearance of a cook shack differed as well. Instead of cooking in cast iron over an open fire, the cook shack usually had a cook stove inside for meal preparation. One or both sides usually raised to provide shade and some had lower sides that folded out for seating.

While some former chuckwagon cooks moved on to helm cook shacks for threshing crews, more often it was a relative, sometimes a female relative, (something virtually unheard of on the trail) that handled the cook shack duties. But the cook at either one knew the main task was to keep the workers fed and—hopefully—happy.

—DJ Taylor



**ABOVE: Edgar Warnack stands next to the cook shack that served the crew of J. D. Joplin's threshing operation east of Lewisville, ca. 1915**

Photo courtesy of the RE & Della Warnack Estate

## Early Denton Autos Featured on Website

For those interested in the history of automobiles—more precisely Denton's first cars—check out this website:



[www.motortexas.com](http://www.motortexas.com).

**Above: Gentry Thompson**

The site's owner, James Wilder, recently contacted us for information. Look for two of the website's blogs about the earliest cars in our county, those owned by Gentry Thompson and A. E. Graham.

The website has information on car shows and motoring events throughout the state.

—DJT

Opinion

## Telling the Whole Tale & Keeping History Real

Opinion

We hear a lot these days about "historical tourism" and its importance to the local economy. It is true that an area's history can appeal to those with a certain level of curiosity about the subject and ultimately generate additional cash for retail outlets as well as taxes for city, county and state coffers. That is a very good thing.

But in promoting our history, whether it is buildings, individuals or events from bygone days, we must be certain that the facts are adhered to and not enhanced for the benefit of showmanship—or omitted because "it wasn't that important" or "might not be well-received." In our own county we've had efforts in years past to rename the Chisholm Trail as the "Chisum" Trail to attach it to a local cattleman from the 1860s who never went that path. Although the issue was supposedly put to rest in a 1930s declaration by an association of the men who used the trail, some folks continued to tell the wrong tale for years. The Texas Historical Commission marker at Denton's IOOF Cemetery bears the weight of this error.

Sanitizing history is another area where historical tourism must walk

a fine line. The old sales adage about selling "the sizzle, not the steak" can often distort history if one is not careful. Sam Bass is sometimes portrayed as a benevolent "Texas Robin Hood" and not as the actual thief and lowlife that was his reality. Sam's touted hideouts in North Texas have become almost as prevalent as the places where Washington reportedly slept; one questions their authenticity.

The bottom line is this: Our history is rich with stories, places, buildings and events. They need to be told thoroughly and correctly because (1) they are worthy and (2) the truth should not be obscured or manufactured to support marketing.

Promoting history is a big part of our mission. But real history should not be sacrificed for promotion's sake. Any deviation from reality is only frolicking in the myth. Let's keep it real, folks.

—DJ Taylor, Bolivar

**The opinions are the writer's own and do not necessarily reflect the position of either the Denton County Historical Commission or its membership.**

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Past issue of *Retrospect* may be viewed online at:  
<http://dentoncounty.com/Departments/History-and-Culture>

**Visit us, Denton County Historical Commission, on Facebook**

### Upcoming Events

**Executive Committee**  
  
**Chair,** Dr. Charlotte Mooneyham  
**First Vice-Chair,** Andy Eads  
**Second Vice-Chair,** Veronica Maldonado  
**Recording Secretary,** Connie Baker  
**Corresponding Secretary,** Jean Carter  
**Financial Secretary,** Lee Capps  
**At-Large-Members:**  
Don Beckel  
Jesse Davis  
Jane Flynn

**Denton County Historical Commission**  
Meets at 3:00pm, 2nd Floor  
Courthouse-on-the-Square  
July 2  
August-**NO MEETING**  
September 3  
  
**Denton County Office of History & Culture Lectures**  
12 noon until 1:00 pm  
Commissioners Courtroom, 2nd floor  
Courthouse-on-the-Square

#### Other Events

July 3: Roanoke Rocks @ Roanoke  
July 4: Kiwanis' Fireworks Show @ Apogee Stadium, Denton  
July 4: Red, White & Lewisville Fireworks@ Vista Ridge Mall  
July 4: Lake Cities 4th of July @ Lake Dallas  
  
August 14-16: Balloon Festival @ Highland Village  
August 21-29: North Texas Fair & Rodeo @ Denton Fairgrounds  
  
September 12: Arts, Antiques & Autos @ Downtown Denton Square  
September 25: Western Days Festival @ Lewisville  
September 26: Dog Days of Denton @ Denton Fairgrounds

**July 1:** Farm Tenants in Texas After the Civil War—Lee Jones  
**August 19:** Populism in Denton County—Robin ett  
**September 16:** US Constitution & Its Amendments—Tom Tweeddale