

West Commerce/Fort Worth Avenue



Of Historical Note

Attention all squads!

November 22, 1963

(Take from Dallas Police Department archives)

In the wake of the assassination, all hell broke loose on the radio channels used by the Dallas Police Department. The Dallas cops swung into action to clear the president's path to Parkland hospital, to find the killer or killers, to run down a variety of false leads and nuisances, and finally to capture the killer of one of their own. Officer H. M. Ashcraft was in his patrol car at Fort Worth Avenue and Sylvan at the time the call went out.

12:30

Chief of Police Jesse E. Curry:

Looks like the President has been hit. Have Parkland stand by.

12:36

Officer 93 (Patrolman H.M. Ashcraft):

93

Dispatcher:

Location?

93:

Sylvan and Fort Worth.

Officer 260 (Sgt. D.V. Harkness):

Witness says shots came from fifth floor, Texas Book Depository Store and Houston and Elm. I have him with me now and we are sealing off the building.

Dispatcher:

93, Inwood and Stemmons and assist 24. 21, go up there to Hines and cut that service road off there where the ambulance can go to Parkland.

12:45

Dispatcher:

Attention Elm and Houston is reported to be an unknown white male, all squads. Attention all squads. The suspect in the shooting at approximately thirty, slender build, height five feet ten inches, weight one hundred sixty-five pounds, reported to be armed with what is thought to be a 30 caliber rifle. Attention all squads. The suspect from Elm and Houston is reported to be an unknown white male about thirty, slender build, five feet ten inches tall, one hundred sixty-five pounds, armed with what is thought to be a 30-30 rifle. No further description at this time, or information. 12:45.

Dispatcher:

Attention all squads, the suspect in the shooting at Elm and Houston is supposed to be an unknown white male,

approximately 30, 165 pounds, slender build, armed with what is thought to be a 30-30 rifle, - repeat, unknown white male, approximately 30, 165 pounds, slender build. No further description at this time or information, 12:45 p.m.

93 (Patrolman Ashcraft):

93.

Dispatcher:

93.

93:

What is 24's location?

24 (Patrolman D.L. Pate):

24's at Stemmons and Continental.

93:

I'm 531. Where do you want me to go?

Dispatcher:

Report to the old School Book Depository around the Elm and Houston area.

Freak Accident

March 4, 2002

(From wire reports)

Memories 96.7 (KMEQ) morning drive host John LaBella was killed Monday morning in a freak accident on Interstate 30 in Dallas. A truck traveling westbound was in the middle lane of I-30 when part of a forklift assembly it was carrying caught the top of the Fort Worth Avenue Bridge, Dallas police Lt. John Branton said. The forklift assembly was ripped off and struck LaBella's eastbound vehicle, killing him, Branton said.

LaBella had been a morning drive radio fixture in Dallas/Fort Worth for more than 20 years. He hosted a morning music show at WTIC AM from the mid-1980s to 1991 and had worked at several Dallas-area stations before joining KMEQ when that station went on the air in 1998. He is survived by his wife and daughter.

"The load was taller than the bridge," said Kenneth Shirley, assistant area engineer for the Texas Department of Transportation. "We've got signs on the bridge and on the road giving fair warning. He (the truck driver) didn't follow the advisory."

Devil's Back Porch

May 23, 1934

(From article written by Gary Cartwright in Texas Monthly, February, 2001)

Bonnie Parker was generous, sensitive, adventurous,



Of Historical Note

compulsive, and doggedly loyal, a small flower of a girl with reddish-gold hair and profoundly blue eyes, vulnerable and fragile and yet tough as nails and willful to the extreme. Clyde Barrow was a scrawny little psychopath with jug ears and the sense of humor of a persimmon, cruel, egotistical, obsessive, vindictive, and so devoid of compassion that he appeared to care more for his machine gun and his saxophone than he did for the women in his life. She had the soul of a poet; he had the heart of a rattlesnake. She wanted a home and children. He wanted revenge. Yet she loved him desperately, and over the course of their 21-month spree of robbing, killing, and running from the law, he came to love her too...

Thousands of Bonnie and Clyde devotees connect through dozens of Web sites.

They argue over such minutiae as Bonnie's shoe size (three), the real color of the 1934 Ford V-8 "death car" (cordoba gray), and who really pulled the trigger on Hillsboro jeweler John N. Bucher in 1932 (an obscure Barrow gang member named Ted Rogers). Relics are scattered across the country, some in the most unlikely of places. The death car is on display in the lobby of Whiskey Pete's Casino in Primm, Nevada, 45 miles south of Las Vegas, as is Clyde's blood-soaked and bullet-tattered shirt. The shirt alone cost the casino \$85,000.

A collector in Colorado is replicating the car to the exact condition as when it was stolen in Topeka, Kansas, in 1934. Another devotee is building a one-twenty-fifth-scale model of the car, complete with bullet holes, broken glass, and tiny models of the torn bodies of Bonnie and Clyde. Bonnie's bloody eyeglasses are owned by a man in Massachusetts. Clyde's sunglasses, one lens shot away, are part of the collection at the Red Man Museum in Waco, which also includes Bonnie's makeup kit and a tablet of her poetry. Locks of their hair and pieces of their clothing, salvaged at the scene of the ambush by ghoulish spectators, reside in anonymous private collections. (Only quick action by lawmen prevented one trophy hunter from amputating Clyde's trigger finger.)...

We began the tour by inspecting two locations near the Dallas County courthouse and another on Swiss Avenue, where a teenage Bonnie had worked as a waitress in the years before her introduction to Clyde. She was married at the time to a safecracker named Roy Thornton. When Bonnie fell, she fell hard. In a rush of girlish devotion, she had her name and his tattooed inside a heart on her upper thigh. Thornton was a lousy husband who disappeared for weeks at a time. She vowed to friends that she would never take him back and resolved "to

take no men or nothing seriously. Let all men go to hell!" Two years later, however, Clyde appeared in her life—they met by accident at the home of a mutual friend—and it was love at first sight. Too loyal to divorce Thornton, she continued wearing his ring until the day she died. Clyde Barrow, however, was truly the love of her life...

The perpetually mean streets of West Dallas look today much as they did in the thirties. As the tour bus crossed the Continental Street Viaduct (called the West Dallas Viaduct back then), we were told that this was the neighborhood where the Barrow brothers, Bonnie Parker, Roy Thornton, Raymond and Floyd Hamilton, and a lot of other desperadoes grew up. Then it was called the Devil's Back Porch. Even though it festered in the shadows of downtown Dallas, the city ignored the disgrace of the Porch for years; West Dallas wasn't even incorporated until 1952.

In Bonnie and Clyde's day only two of the streets were paved. Few of the houses had running water or electricity, and some of them didn't have doors or window glass. Jobs were almost nonexistent. Disease and crime went unchecked. Cops who walked the Porch did so in pairs and never by choice. The Brick Hotel, a two-story beer hall, gambling parlor, and dope den, was an infamous safe house for outlaws and fugitives such as Machine Gun Kelly...

Singleton Boulevard, the main drag today, is a jumble of auto repair shops, junkyards, warehouses, cafes, service stations, and small frame houses with "Beware of the Dog" signs out front. The homes and businesses are owned mostly by Hispanics and blacks. The place looked much the same in the thirties, except the main drag was called Eagle Ford Road and the homes and businesses were owned by poor whites. In the decades between 1920 and 1940 the population of Dallas almost doubled as thousands of families were forced off their land by the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. They settled in squatters' camps under the viaducts and along the river bottom, living in tents and cardboard lean-tos. Henry Barrow, an illiterate sharecropper, moved his wife, Cumie, and their seven children from the small town of Telico, southeast of Dallas, to a camp on Muncie Street, next to the West Dallas railroad track. Clyde was eleven at the time and never forgot the humiliation of his squatters' camp initiation. He enrolled in the sixth grade at Sidney Lanier Elementary School but quit after about a week, moved in with his older sister, Nell, and took a job at a candy company. Nell spoiled him. Her husband, a musician, taught Clyde to play the saxophone, which, along with guns, became a lifelong obsession. Soon he was supplementing his income by stealing bicycles and hubcaps.

Meanwhile, Henry Barrow built a three-room house for his remaining family and hacked out a meager living picking up scrap metal in his horse cart and selling it. When his horse was killed by a car while crossing the Houston Street Viaduct, Henry sued and won a small sum. With the money, he moved his house to a vacant lot on Eagle Ford Road and converted the front room into a service station and store. The building that used to be the Barrows' home and their service





Of Historical Note

station-store stands today at the corner of Singleton and Borger. In the thirties Eagle Ford Road (now Singleton) was a well-known escape route for Clyde and his gang. They called it the back door.

After a holdup or during a police chase, Clyde would accelerate whatever car he happened to be stealing across the West Dallas Viaduct, down Eagle Ford Road, across the Trinity's west fork at the old ford, then negotiate the rutted dirt road to Irving and disappear into the vast isolation of North Texas and the Great Plains. Similarly, the Barrow gang used the back door to sneak back into West Dallas when Bonnie could no longer stand another day away from her beloved mother. Clyde maintained favor with the neighbors by distributing large sums of cash, buying not only goodwill but also silence. In one of Bonnie's poems the old neighborhood is celebrated as the Great Divide:

*From Irving to West Dallas Viaduct
Is known as the Great Divide
Where the women are kin, and men are men,
And they won't "stool" on Bonnie and Clyde...*

Around the corner from the old gas station sits a small frame duplex that was used in the thirties as a safe house for outlaws; on its front porch Clyde blew apart Tarrant County deputy Malcolm Davis, who was a member of a posse that surprised him one night. The home of Barrow gang members Raymond and Floyd Hamilton sits nearby. Up the hill on Fort Worth Avenue, in one corner of a picturesque pre-Civil War cemetery called Western Heights, is the Barrow family plot. Clyde is buried next to his older brother, Marvin "Buck"

Barrow, who died after a shootout with the cops in Dexfield Park, Iowa, nine months before Clyde got it. Their joint headstone reads "Gone but Not Forgotten." The headstone is embedded in a foot

of concrete to prevent trophy hunters from carrying it away. "Someone used to steal it every Texas-OU weekend," Phillips told us. "One time the police recovered it from the home of a prominent businessman who was using it as a coffee table to entertain his weekend guests."...

The bodies were put on public view, first at an Arcadia furniture store, which doubled as a funeral parlor, then again in Dallas. At the coroner's inquest someone stole Clyde's diamond stickpin. A photographer took pictures of their naked bodies. A man offered the Barrow family \$50,000 for Clyde's body, which he wanted to mummify and take on tour with a traveling tent show. An estimated 10,000 people crowded into Clyde's funeral, nearly wrecking the old Belo mansion on Ross



Avenue, which had been converted into a funeral home. An airplane chartered by racketeer Benny Binion flew over Clyde's grave site and dropped a floral wreath. Bonnie's funeral the following day was more orderly. She was laid out in a silver casket, dressed in a blue silk negligee, her head wounds partly covered by her permanent wave. The newspaper boys of Dallas, who had benefited so handsomely from her infamy, sent the largest wreath...

Jack Flippo: Private Eye

July 17, 1997

(Taken from New York Times article written by Sam Howe Verhovek on crime novelist Doug J. Swanson)

"You want the Flippo tour?" asks Doug J. Swanson, author and creator of Jack Flippo, a down-and-out Texas private eye. He points the car west into the Dallas night, away from the gaudy, neon skyline of downtown, over the mud-ditch Trinity River and into a neighborhood of factories, fleabag motels and dingy doughnut shops.

At one time, Jack Flippo, the chief character in Mr. Swanson's three crime novels, was a young assistant district attorney in Dallas, a man with a future.

This tour includes two storefront tarot parlors, an inexpensive Salvadoran restaurant and a very budget motel on Fort Worth Avenue, which helpfully advises its clientele that drug dealing and prostitution are not allowed. (The place, or one a lot like it, gets torched in "96 Tears.") Also on the itinerary is Brownie's Coffee Shop, an east Dallas hangout with eight colors of vinyl seats. In real life, a collection agency and a beeper-repair shop are just above the place; in the books, the coffee shop is called Greenie's, and Flippo's office is upstairs.

Demon Rum

December 15, 1956

(from Tyler Street Methodist Church Web site)

Oak Cliff voted itself dry (no sales of liquor) on December 15, 1956. The campaign was supported by a number of Oak Cliff ministers including Buel Crouch of Grace Baptist Church and Dr. Stuckey of Tyler Street.

West Dallas' Mamma

July 28, 1946

(From an article written in The Dallas Morning News by Kenneth Foree)

On a gloomy November day of 1934, with a cold rain falling, two women drove out to the muck and filth of the West Dallas Squatters Camp.

One was Mrs. Ruth Norris Fox, relief supervisor. In tow, was an inexperienced case worker, Mrs. E. W. Winston,



Of Historical Note

born and raised an aristocrat. They walked in the muck, talked with unfortunates in tin hovels, saw hungry people who had no food, no stoves, no wood, found two big families to one small room, a room which had garbage and slop on the floor.

Said Mrs. Fox to her companion, whose finely chiseled face, beautiful brown eyes and black hair, indicate the beauty of the young woman who refused a debut, "You're going to like West Dallas."

Mrs. Emma Weaver Winston, who had just sold her home after the \$50,000 in stock left her by her father in the Briggs-Weaver Machinery Company, had been wiped out, and had asked and received a \$100-a-month job to support her two children, was terrified. It was the day of Clyde Barrow and Raymond Hamilton. She went home and bawled.

In the middle of her cry, she stopped. Those poor friendless, hungry, browbeaten people. Why, it was her duty to help them, it was her duty to do for pay, what she, as a rich man's daughter and well-to-do young matron, had once done for fun.

She has been doing so ever since. And, you who lift your noses at West Dallas, or dub it a crime center because it once produced two notorious bandits, can get an earful from Mrs. Winston, thusly: "These people are just as nice as they can be. They're just unfortunate. And, if they had the education, they'd be just as smart as you. They have much native ability."

But, she did not think so that day she took the job and went back alone. The women hovel dwellers quickly asked, "Is you a government woman?" meaning an informer, and learned, "I'm just trying to make a living helping you." That ended that, and Mrs. Winston quickly found, "They were the sweetest men and women I ever saw. So appreciative." In fact, in a month, she could have pitched a cot in the middle of squatters camp and anyone who bothered her would have been killed.

She went all over that area trying to run down cases with addresses on unmarked streets such as "back of the green store," "north of the filling station," and among those who were most helpful, was Dad Barrow, who said quietly, "My kids didn't have a chance. Got started pilferin'."

And, Mrs. Winston's heart went out to kids who had no park, no school clothes, no lunches, no carfare, nothing to do but get into trouble. She saw things that were against the law. One day, she saw the hunted Raymond Hamilton.

"Hadn't we better call the law?" asked her companion, and was told "I am not a policeman." She was there to help them, not to arrest them.

One day, the PWA opened a nursery project. Mrs. Winston was put in charge, and up the hill, came 125 kids to get in a place that was warm, where there was food, kids with malnutrition, tuberculosis, bugs, impetigo. She washed them, deloused them, treated them, in what to them, was heaven.

Then, after a year, the gates to heaven were slammed shut. The project was closed. Mrs. Winston called a meeting of women at her home and told her tale. Said Mrs. Doak Roberts,

president of the Sunshine Club, "I don't know how we'll do it, but the Sunshine Club will take over."

They found a 65-year-old, four-room house on Chappell Street. It had no sewerage, no water, but a father hauled a barrel of water; the Sunshine Club provided shoes and clothes, and Mrs. Winston carried on.

One night, in an area of no street lights, she decided to give the bigger girls a slice of heaven--a party. Just as the girls held in their hands tin plates with refreshments, big boys rushed in, slapped the plates in the air. The girls ran into the night. The boys faced her with "Well, you old hag, whatcha gonna do about it? Tell the law?"

Mrs. Winston stood her ground. "No, I'm not. But, I was going to give you a party, too. Now, I don't think I will."

They slunk out. Two weeks later, they begged for a party, were given a picnic, ball game and ice cream. She has never had any trouble since.

Since then, she has worked incessantly with adults as well as children. She appealed and got city and county help, and in 1936, the Community Chest took over. Her first big problem was health; you can't sell religion and education to sick people. She found a congregation praying for divine healing over a screaming baby; she found mothers, attended only by midwives, and newborn babies dying in shacks where there were no stoves, no wood, no sheets.

Brother, she went into action, saved lives, overcoming first, a fear of hospitals and doctors, who might administer the black serum of death. Religion, too, she sold, one teacher even going to a fishing pool to teach boys who had cut class on a pretty fishing day.

But, all that is over the hill. Nowadays, there are mothers and dads clubs, birth-control and prenatal clinics, visiting nurses and physicians, athletics, Scouts, a nursery from which go good-mannered pupils who study hard. Health is up, crime is down and West Dallas is ambitious--ambitious to have the little things others take for granted--water, drainage, sewerage...

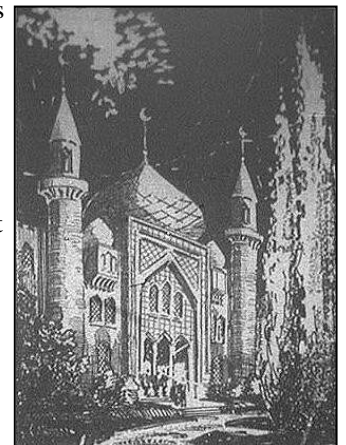
High Class in Nature

September 2, 1928

(Unattributed article from Dallas Times Herald)

Work has been started on a \$150,000 exclusive high class supper club on the Fort Worth pike, eight miles from Dallas, it was learned Saturday. The club will be one of the finest of its kind in the Southwest, the builders say.

The foundation for the building was completed last week. Contract has not been let for the building itself yet, but





Of Historical Note

will be awarded soon, according to F. W. Day, who is to be general manager of the club. It may be let this week, he added. The club will be constructed by the Bagdad Enterprises, Inc., a Texas corporation, controlled by Eastern capital. Stock in the corporation may be sold to Dallasites later on, it was announced. The corporation is a subsidiary of a large Eastern company that confines itself to various theatrical lines.

The name of the club is to be "The Bagdad Supper Club. It will deal with trade of only high class nature, according to Mr. Day. He added that it would be an innovation in forms of entertainment that Dallas has been receiving.

The building will be of Moorish design, according to the builders. It will be a two-story structure, stuccoed on the outside. The building will have rounded spires, just as the old buildings of the Moors. It will be distinctively oriental in all of its features.

The structure will be built on a four and one-half acre tract. It will be set back three hundred feet from the pike. A "horseshoe" driveway will be constructed to the building, in addition to a walk.

In the center of the walk leading to the building, a large fountain will be constructed. A parking space will be provided for over three hundred automobiles around the building.

A stage, dance floor, dining rooms and lounging rooms have been provided for in the plans. The dance floor will be one of the largest in the Southwest, says Mr. Day. Plans call for the main dining room to have a seating capacity of 450 persons.

Mr. Day will leave for Chicago this week to obtain the services of a nationally known band for the opening of the club, and also to secure recognized entertainers. He said that a floor show would be obtained that consisted of from twelve to fifteen people.

According to present plans, two shows will be staged each night, one about 6:30 p. m., during the dinner hour, and the other about 1 a. m. for the after theater crowd.

The performers will be provided with living quarters at the club, so they may be available at any time for special occasions.

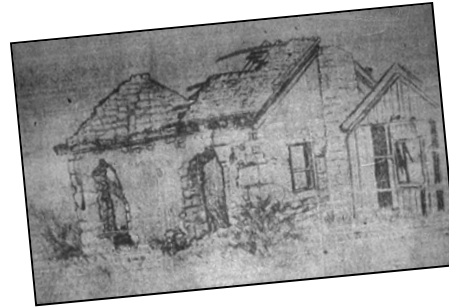


Cement City Cottage

December 20, 1925

(Taken from article by D. L. Miller in the Dallas Daily Times Herald via

<http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~jwheat/landmarks1925.html>)



On the present site of Cement City in Dallas, is to be found one of the most interesting of all Dallas county ruins. It is a cottage erected in 1854 by members of the French colony,

which established itself here then.

Material used for the house was native limestone, commonly known as "white rock." Several contractors who have examined this and other old structures in which this material was used, say it demonstrates possibilities for more extensive use of it in the future. The soft limestone exposed to the weather increases in hardness and the walls possess an attractive appearance. It is only near the ground line that evidences of disintegration are to be found. Some builders say that a house with walls of this limestone set on a concrete foundation would last forever.

The old French home, one of a number still to be seen near Cement City, was soon abandoned. Members of the French colony were artisans, not farmers. They were unable to cope with the conditions met in a pioneer agricultural country. Most of them returned to France. A few later located in Dallas, and the family names are preserved in the case of a number of city streets.

Large Force of Men

December 23, 1903

(Unattributed article from Dallas Daily Times Herald via <http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~jwheat/landmarks03.html>)

The announcement of the sale of the old toll station at the east approach of the Commerce street bridge by the county to the Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway company means that the quaint old brick house that rises from the river bottom to a distance of some eight or ten feet above the street level, and that was constructed more than thirty years ago, is soon to be torn down, and that a line of eighty-pound steel rails of an important system will soon take up the space formerly occupied by the domicile of the collector of tolls, whose services have been done away with many years, as the bridge was purchased by the county from its owners and



Of Historical Note

converted from a pay bridge to a free one.

The history of the Commerce street bridge dates back to the beginning of the seventies, at which time, a company was formed, and a charter secured from the state to construct a bridge across Trinity river at the foot of Commerce street. The company was known as the Dallas Bridge company, and had for its president, A. C. Camp. The directors of the company were, J. W. Crowder, George M. Swink, John H. Bryan, W. H. Prather, J. W. Haynes and J. K. P. Record. The undertaking of the company was considered a stupendous affair in those days of early frontier life, and limited shipping facilities, and when patrons of the little ferry boat operated by Mrs. Sarah Cockrell, across the river at the point where the bridge was to be built, were informed of the organization of the company and its object, as they were ferried across the stream, their lower jaws dropped in astonishment, and prophecies were ventured by the more reckless settlers that Dallas Town would some day be in a position to boast of two-story brick stores and three or four wagon yards.

After the formation of the company, its members cast about for a suitable location for the spanning of the stream, and the foot of Commerce street was unanimously decided upon as being the best point at which to build the bridge.

The decision of the company was made known to Mrs. Sarah Cockrell, and that very estimable lady encouraged the project to the extent of entering into an agreement with the company on the 29th of April, 1871, to furnish gratis, a right of way of 100 feet in width, through and across her lands, beginning at a point near the foot of Commerce street "in the town of Dallas," on the east bank of the Trinity, thence in a westerly direction across the river, and the bottom beyond. The company was given permission to fell and use all timber growing thereon, and to dig, excavate and raise embankments upon the same, as was found necessary in the construction of their bridge, and the causeway therefrom across the river bottom. She did not stop at this, but further agreed to carry, and convey free of charge across the river on her ferry boat, the employees, wagons and teams of the company during the work of construction.

Mrs. Cockrell also granted permission to the company to use all the rock, stone, earth and gravel from her lands that were required in the construction of the bridge. She agreed to issue a deed to the property to the company when the bridge was completed, and according to the records of the Commissioners' court, this deed was recorded in June, 1872, the company having complied with the terms of the contract or agreement. The ferry beneath the might bridge was soon discontinued.

The country settled up very rapidly, and hundreds of ranchers, planters and stage drivers coming to and going from Dallas, used the Commerce street bridge. The affairs of the company rocked along in a very satisfactory manner for about nine years, and then matters began to become adverse. At a

meeting of the Commissioners' court on Dec. 20, 1881, evidence was introduced before the court that the Dallas Bridge company had failed to erect a good and substantial causeway across the river bottom, as required by the terms of their charter, and a resolution was introduced ordering a suit against the company for forfeiture of charter. This was not deemed expedient, and considerable discussion upon the subject followed.

It was finally decided that a committee of two be appointed to confer with the directors of the bridge company with a view of ascertaining upon what terms and considerations the county could purchase the bridge. This committee was composed of N. O. McAdams and J. W. Keller, and they were instructed to report back to the Commissioners' court at the next term, which convened the second Monday in February of 1882. The committee conferred with the directors, and the stockholders of the bridge company signified their willingness to dispose of the bridge for the sum of \$41,600 cash, or its equivalent. The county officials demurred at this price, and they immediately set about to make diligent inquiry and investigation as to the value of the bridge. Estimates from bridge-building concerns were also secured as to the cost of constructing a similar bridge with a turnpike from the bridge to the high ground on the west side. It was learned that the work could be done at a cost not to exceed \$27,000, being \$14,000 less than the price asked by the Dallas Bridge company for their bridge. The Commissioners' court then decided to offer the bridge company \$25,000 for the property. The proposition met with a refusal.

The bridge was finally transferred in August, 1882, to the county, the consideration being \$38,000, and bonds were issued by the county judge for the purpose of making the purchase.

After the bridge passed into the hands of the county, the collection of tolls was discontinued, and pedestrians and vehicles were permitted to come and go at their pleasure, free of any charge.

The old bridge finally began to weaken under the heavy traffic of years, and in 1890, its two iron spans were torn down and converted into two separate bridges, one being placed at Miller's ferry, five miles south of Dallas, and the other at Gar Wheeler crossing, six miles north of Dallas. This work necessitated an outlay of about \$11,000. The contract for the present bridge was let in 1889, and the bridge was erected in 1890. The bridge now used is considerably larger, and somewhat longer than the old bridge, and is beyond the heaviest traveled bridge in Dallas county. Its length, including the approaches, is seven hundred feet, and it is the second largest bridge in the county, the longest bridge in Dallas county being the old wagon bridge across the river running south from Cadiz street.

A large force of men have been busily engaged in relaying the floor of the present bridge during the last ten days, and the work of repairing will amount to something like \$2500. A great many new timbers have been placed in the bridge, and



Of Historical Note

it will be practically as good as a new bridge within a week's time.

The Hollywood Club

(By Jim Cullum, Jr. from <http://www.landing.com/stories/hclub.htm>)

A partnership ensued as Dad and Garner established the Hollywood Club on an outlying desolate strip of the Fort Worth Pike. Something had been there before the Hollywood, but I know nothing of the predecessor. The venture seemed doomed to failure almost from the start.

My mother was on hand and spent much of her time mopping up the ladies' room as the club had severe plumbing problems and the toilets regularly overflowed. The place served Cajun-style food and had a full professional jazz band. It was the typical musician's dream. Garner began to almost live there, and had a cot in the liquor storage room. (The fox was really in charge of the chicken coop!).

The club had good music but nothing else went well. Several months of uncharacteristic rain began and, unbeknownst to our heroes, a large amount of water accumulated on the sunken flat roof. In the night club business, rainy nights always mean poor attendance and the club's location was a severe handicap. As business dropped off, desperate attempts were made to salvage things. The Hollywood was made into a "private club" so that liquor could be served by the drink (at that time prohibited by Texas liquor laws). After a few weeks, the law swooped down, Garner was arrested, and spent a night in jail.



Then a deal was worked out with some professional gamblers who converted a portion of the club into a casino. What a scene! A jazz band and its listeners and dancers occupied approximately one-half of the club, and gambling tables hidden behind a ceiling-to-floor curtain were active in the other half. At this time the water on the roof, trapped

for several months, finally worked its way through, and water began to "rain" all over the gambling tables.

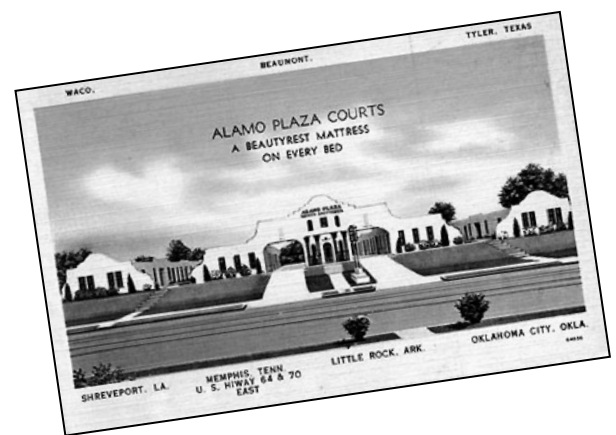
The place had an unpaved parking lot which was turned into a churned mud-hole during the heavy rains. Customers' cars regularly sank to the axles. The porter/janitor often attempted to drive a stuck car out of the muck, and was very skilled in these maneuvers, often succeeding. A couple of times he lost his shoes in the sticky mud. Once, keys were accidentally dropped in the mud in the dark, and the earnest porter (whose name is lost to posterity) dove for them, returning to the light of the Hollywood Club entrance completely covered with mud. For a while, the club resorted to keeping a full-time wrecker on hand to pull cars out of the parking lot.

Ah, memories! I can remember leaving our comfortable home to accompany my father for a Sunday afternoon session at the Hollywood Club. Our route took us across several old rickety wooden bridges across the Trinity River. I was allowed to steer the car down these back roads and over a couple of the bridges. Once at the club, I would hit up the musicians for quarters which I would use to play the gamblers' slot machines. Nothing was more fun.

Remember the Alamo Courts

(Taken from <http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/wooda/card.html>)

During the thirties and forties, individual owners dominated the roadside haven trade -- with the exception of Lee Torrance and his fledgling Alamo Courts chain. For a time, "courtiers" offered a glimpse of the American Dream: home and business ownership on the same site.



Commerce Beauty

July 12, 2002

(Taken from article written by Bob Ray Sanders in Fort Worth Star-Telegram via http://www.dfw.com/mld/startelegram/news/columnists/bob_ra)



Of Historical Note

y_sanders/3648158.htm

Earlier this week, I told you about the beautifully engineered Hampton Road Bridge over the old Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike (Interstate 30) just west of downtown Dallas, and I promised you a list of some of my other favorites in the area...

In Dallas, there are two standouts, both crossing the Trinity River...

Connecting Dallas to the large community west of the Trinity is the Commerce Street Viaduct, with its period street lamps. The contractor for the project, built in 1930, was the Austin Bridge Co.

Dallas Highlights

1957

(Taken from <http://www.dallashistory.org/html/1950s.html>)

Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike, the first in Texas, opens. Dallas Civic Opera debuts with Maria Callas as guest star. Calvert Collins (Mrs. Carr P. Collins, Jr.) becomes the first woman elected to the Dallas City Council.

Pappy's Showland

December, 1997

(Taken from The Herd, Sunset High School Classes of 1957 and 1958)

Driving east towards Sylvan, there is a series of old motels and businesses that look pretty much the same today as they did in the '50's, some maybe better. On the north side, at Windomere, is the Western Heights Cemetery (which has a Texas Historical marker) and is where Clyde Barrow was buried. And at Sylvan, there are two historic motels. At the NW corner is the Travel Lodge Motel on the hill, which has the white bungalow-type rooms. I've heard that the Travel Lodge was originally built by O. L. Nelms and once had a restaurant and club. Also, I was told that actor Ward Bond died there many years ago after suffering a heart attack.

On the SE corner is the Alamo Motel. The Alamo, with its Spanish architecture, and the Travel Lodge, which recently had a fire, are both still there but have definitely seen better days. Moving past Sylvan to Commerce St., I remembered Semos Restaurant (great for breakfast) and Gabby Hall Wrecking Yard (both gone) on the north side and Hicks Mobile Homes (owned by parents of Mike Hicks ('58)), and Pappy's Showland on the south. Actually, I was too young to remember Pappy's, but I do remember hearing stories about



what a wonderful nightclub it used to be and some of the famous entertainers who performed there. A mobile home park is now located where it used to be.

Cedar

Walton:

The Composer's Roots

October 29, 1999

(Taken from article by Harvey Pekar in The Austin Chronicle)

Listen back-to-back to a dozen of the many albums on which pianist Cedar Walton has appeared since the late Fifties, and you come away wondering if the 65-year-old, Dallas-born jazzman has played so well for so long that he's being taken for granted. Around this same time, Walton was also listening to live radio performances by some of the major big bands and pianists Nat Cole, Art Tatum, Austin-born Teddy Wilson, and Erroll Garner. Before long, he too would be working with some fine musicians.

"I played at a bar called Pappy's Showland with baritone saxman Leroy Cooper, who was with Ray Charles for so long. I worked a lot with Fathead Newman [also a Charles mainstay]. Musically, he was a generation ahead of me."

Asked about his formative years in Dallas, and the fact that Ornette Coleman, Dewey Redman, and Prince Lasha all came out of the Fort Worth scene, the name Red Connor, a legendary tenorman who is supposed to have been a free jazz player and to have influenced them, comes up...

Putt Putt and Senior Pictures

December, 1997

(Taken from article written by Max Maris for The Herd, Sunset High School Classes of 1957 and 1958)

Let's take a drive on Ft. Worth Ave., starting at Sivils Drive-in and heading northeast to where it connects with Commerce St. In the last issue of the HERD, some of you mentioned Sivils and how much it had meant to all of us. So when I pulled onto the now vacant lot off Davis, I felt as if I was on hallowed ground. Believe it or not, you can still drive through the old Sivils area and get out on the other side on Ft. Worth Ave. Just think, I could have been parked with Jan some 40 years ago at the very same spot where I was now! I sat there for several minutes and recalled some of those wonderful



Of Historical Note

memories from the '50's.

Sivils was one of the first places I headed for to show off my '57 Chevy. There was no better place to take your date or friends for a good 'ol hamburger basket and fries. The Griddle System and Dairy Queen were both great, but Sivils was tops. Those carhops in their white satin outfits looked pretty good, too! Anyway, after avoiding broken concrete and potholes getting out of Sivils, I headed towards Westmoreland Ave. Nothing looks the same today. I remembered a Spartan Discount Store near the SW corner. It was a Gibson type store, except cheaper. Driving east, there was Roth's Steak House (now gone) on the left and Bronco Bowl on the right.



If you can, stop by and see Bronco Bowl. It has been beautifully updated, and the concert arena in the back has booked many big name entertainers since it reopened last year.

Moving on towards Hampton Rd., I remembered a Howard Johnson's Restaurant (now gone), the Stevens Park Apartments (still there, and look about the same) and the Stevens Park Shopping Center (still there, but now updated) on the right. I must also mention the Wedgwood high-rise apartments (still there, but now a retirement center) and the Stevens Park Golf Course, where I was a caddy and still, I think, one of the most beautiful golf courses in Dallas.

On the north side, there was a small strip shopping center where the original Tupinambas Restaurant was located. The restaurant was opened in the late '40's by the Dominquez family. Their son, Eddie, now owns and operates the only one

left in Dallas. Continuing past Hampton, there was the Stevens Park Theater and Putt-Putt miniature golf course (both gone) on the left. Cathey Photography Studio (where we had our senior pictures taken), the Miramar Motel (still there), and the Brookwood Apartments (at Plymouth Rd.) are on



the south side.

Driving east towards Sylvan, there is a series of old motels and businesses that look pretty much the same today as they did in the '50's, some maybe better. On the north side, at Windomere, is the Western Heights Cemetery (which has a Texas Historical marker) and is where Clyde Barrow was

buried. And at Sylvan, there are two historic motels. At the NW corner is the Travel Lodge Motel on the hill, which has the white bungalow-type rooms. I've heard that the Travel Lodge was originally built by O. L. Nelms and once had a restaurant and club. Also, I was told that actor Ward Bond died there many years ago after suffering a heart attack.

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Hard Times for Cement City

(Taken from

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/CC/hrc36.html>)

Cement or Cement City was on the Missouri Pacific Railroad three miles west of downtown Dallas, south of the Trinity River and north of the old site of La Réunion in central Dallas County. The community was named for the two cement plants, its largest employers. Émile Remond arrived from France in 1856, acquired property in the La Réunion colony tract after it dissolved in 1857, and began a brick-making business. Because of an interest in geology he began experimenting with the white rocks on the west bank of the Trinity and discovered in the late 1880s that the area was ideal for lime and cement manufacturing. He later started the Iola Cement Plant, which existed for only a short time.

Around 1901 a group of Galveston investors heard of the cement-making potential of the area and organized the Trinity Portland Cement Company. The Texas and Pacific ran through the area. In 1907 the company opened, and families moved in to work. A local post office operated from 1907 until 1915. At that time Cement had a population of 500, telephone connections, a physician, and grocery, drug, and general stores.

A short time later Cement City High School was built. On November 15, 1928, the Cement City school system merged with the Dallas Independent School District.

By 1931 Cement City was incorporated and had a population of 609 and eight businesses. By the mid-1930s the number of businesses had risen to fourteen. The area became so highly industrialized through its production of cement, one of Dallas County's most important products, that the residential area of the town declined; the population in the early 1940s was only 249. By 1951 the community was unincorporated.



Of Historical Note

The population rose to 450 in 1960, the last time Cement is mentioned as an independent community.

Amen

May, 1983

(Headline taken from Christian Journal regarding Western Heights Church of Christ)

“Historic Dallas Church Closes After 111 Years of Service”

Weekly Eaglet

(Taken from

<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/print/EE/hte2.html>)

Eagle Ford was on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad and Loop 12 six miles west of downtown Dallas in western Dallas County. It was on the original land grants of H. Burnham and the Buffalo Bayou, Brazos and Colorado Railway. The area was first settled by the family of Enoch Horton, who moved there from Missouri in 1844 and established a home at a shallow part of the West Fork of the Trinity River, which became a fording spot for travelers. When Horton found an eagle's nest in the area, he named the crossing Eagle Ford. Several pioneer families from La Réunion settled in Eagle Ford. One source claims that another landowner was French marshal Achille François Bazaine, who was sent to Mexico by Napoleon III to help establish Austrian archduke Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph as emperor of Mexico in the 1860s. While in Mexico Bazaine reportedly acquired approximately 200 acres of land in the Eagle Ford area.

Eagle Ford had a post office from 1858 until 1866. The community did not begin to develop until the depression of 1873 halted construction of the Texas and Pacific Railway, which made Eagle Ford its western terminus until 1876. With the construction of cattle-holding facilities, the community soon became a cattle-shipping point to rival Dallas and Fort Worth as the major city of North Texas. Eagle Ford grew from a small community centered around a general store to a community with a population of several thousand people and fifty new businesses and homes, including a two-story hotel and a railway station. One year later W. W. Basaye began publishing the *Weekly Eaglet*, and the community secured another post office that operated until 1918.

By 1876 construction of the Texas and Pacific had resumed, and the line was completed to Fort Worth in 1878. The westward movement of the railroad decreased Eagle Ford's importance as a cattle-shipment center, but the community evolved into an agricultural shipping point for the surrounding region. By 1882 it had a population of 200, a cotton gin and a flour mill, two schools, and a general store. The community was primarily farmers, including the Santerre and Girard

families, John Laupot, B. Lavois, Frank Horton, and Wesley Cockrell.

The Eagle Ford population decreased to fifty in the 1890s and stayed at that level well into the 1930s. By 1941 the population had increased to 150. After World War II Eagle Ford grew rapidly, when the return of war veterans spurred housing development in the area. The demand for housing was so great that by 1946 many of the residents in the town were living in temporary shelters until houses could be built. This construction was accompanied by industrial growth and infrastructure construction, which by 1947 included a steel-fabricating plant and new schools and roads. Eagle Ford was incorporated into Dallas in 1956, when it had a population of 4,679.

Bilbo Jitney Line

1915

(Taken from

www.dallaschc.org/Dallas%20County%20Markers.xls)

Bilbo Jitney Line, Headquarters Site
Sylvan Avenue and Seale (in triangle)

In 1915, when public transportation was non-existent in the western part of Dallas, Victor Clifford Bilbo (1894 - 1968) began operating a jitney (small bus) line from downtown to Cement City, Gates, Sowers, Irving, and other outlying communities. Paying five cents per ride, passengers often sat three deep and hung on running boards of Bilbo's Model T Ford touring cars. He often took people to hospitals and funerals free of charge. In August 1927, because of new state franchise laws, the Bilbo jitneys were replaced by buses.

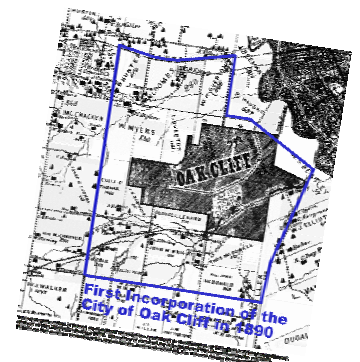
No, over here!

No, over there!

February 21, 1891

(Taken from <http://www.laurissa.com/Stevens/AnnulledOC.htm> by Jim Barnes and *The Hidden City: Oak Cliff Texas* by Bill Minutaglio & Holly Williams)

"...confusion and disagreement over what Oak Cliff's boundaries are and should be were rampant even at this earliest of dates. On Feb. 21, 1891, the City of Oak Cliff [ordained by the County Commission on October 6th, 1891 following a 392 to 37 vote balloting on September 27th] was dissolved by the local courts. Mrs. S.E. Pollard, a farm owner, sued to void the incorporation claiming the boundaries took in too much uninhabited





Of Historical Note

territory. A second election was held June 9, 1891 to shrink the City of Oak Cliff boundaries...to incorporate a 3.5 mile area instead of a 10 mile area. Only 19 people voted against Oak Cliff becoming a city."

Coombs Creek Ghost

(From <http://www.ratrunk.com/texas.htm>)

In the Dallas in the suburb of Oak Cliff there is the local tale about a little girl in a bike that haunts a street called Coombs Creek by the railroad tracks. The story is that a little girl was riding her bike on the railroad and supposedly she got stuck and got run over by the train and now she haunts this little deserted street by the railroads.

Warren Commission

1963-1964

(From: <http://www.jmasland.com/cd-g.htm>)

On File: FBI Document 1177a, June 23, 1964:
Letterhead memo entitled "Jack L. Ruby; Lee Harvey Oswald"
RE Crowe's activities re. Shady Oaks and Palomino Motels

(From Warren Commission files, Volume XV Testimony of William D. Crowe Jr. at http://history-matters.com/archive/jfk/wc/wcvols/wh15/pdf/WH15_Crowe.pdf):

Mr. Hubert:

Tell us in general what contacts you had with Jack Ruby during the period of November 11 through the 22nd or 23rd of November, to the day the President was shot?

Mr. Crowe:

Well, outside of seeing him at the club when he was there, and going to breakfast with him once in a while after working hours, that was it.

Mr. Hubert:

Where did you live in Dallas?

Mr. Crowe:

At the time I was at the Palomino Hotel on Fort Worth Avenue.

Mr. Hubert:

Did you choose the place yourself?

Mr. Crowe:

Yes, I had stayed there previously.

(From Warren Commission files, Volume XXI Testimony of Ralph Paul at http://history-matters.com/archive/jfk/wc/wcvols/wh21/pdf/WH21_Paul_Ex_5319.pdf):

Ralph Paul, a white male, said he was born at Keiv, Russia, December 17, 1899...

Owner, Bull Pen, Arlington, Texas, being sole owner since 1/1/63, and president of the Texas Corp., which owns this drive-in restaurant; former partner of the Miramar Drive-In,

located 1922 Ft. Worth Avenue, Dallas, from April, 1954 to February, 1956, at which time he sold out...

Prior to the above business connection, he had owned the Blue Bonnet Bar, located in the Blue Bonnet Hotel, Dallas, being-so engaged from November, 1948 to September, 1953, at which time he sold this business to Joe Bonds for \$3,000, which amount was never, paid by Bonds. They had a verbal agreement.

Prior to that, Paul was part-owner of the Sky Club, located on West Commerce Street; Dallas, being so employed between January 19 until May 19.

Officer J.D. Tippit at Ship's Grill

1964

(By Bill Drenas, taken from <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/top10.htm>)

It is interesting to note that the Ship's Grill was located at 2138 Fort Worth Ave and that J.D. Tippit worked security as a deterrent to trouble on Sunday afternoons at the Steven's Park Theatre which was located at 2007 Fort Worth Ave. Earl contacted some of Tippit's fellow police officers who knew him well to try and corroborate these stories about the Ship's Grill and Theatre Lounge. Bill Anglin, Tippit's neighbor and close friend told Earl "No sir he never worked at the Theater Lounge"



"As far as I know there's not any truth to that at all, the reason I say that is that it was a violation with our code of conduct for us to be employed by such places where alcoholic beverages were served"

"As a personal friend I never heard him mention anything about a job up there like that" Morris Brumley was also a long time friend of Tippit's, he

told Earl

"He never did work those joints, he (Tippit) worked that district when he was a young patrolman, but as far as working there off duty they didn't even permit officers back then to work around anyplace that served alcoholic beverages"

Brumley went on to say "We checked all that out (Tippit working at the Theater Lounge) that they had seen him in there, that there was a connection and there wasn't."

"I worked Intelligence and Vice and we shook that Theater Lounge down a lot and J.D. Tippit never did work there at any of those places."

In a conversation with Earl he told me that recently he had talked to someone who surprised him by saying very nonchalantly that Tippit certainly was a doorman or bouncer at the Ship's Grill. Earl said this source is "someone who would have been pretty knowledgeable."



Of Historical Note

This is all the information that I was able to gather on the Ship's Grill and Theater Lounge allegations. As the reader can see by the conflicting stories that it is unclear as to the exact circumstances surrounding this issue.

First Settlers

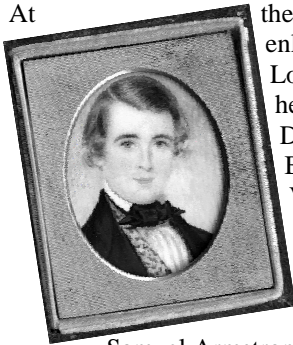
1870

(From

http://chronicles.dickinson.edu/encyclo/s/ed_stevensJH.html)

John Stevens was a great-great-grandson of Adam Miller, the first Euro-American settler in the Shenandoah Valley. He was born at Harrisonburg, Virginia. Records show that he was in Carlisle, at the Dickinson Preparatory School, in 1840. Stevens graduated from Dickinson College in 1845; the next year he earned an M.D. from the University of Virginia. In 1848, Dickinson's Board of Trustees awarded Stevens an M.A. "in curso" for his continuing medical study at the hospital in Philadelphia.

Sometime thereafter, Stevens moved to the hamlet of Vienna in Jackson Parish, Louisiana where he practiced medicine and acquired a plantation with slaves. He was elected to the Louisiana State Legislature, serving in both chambers. At



the onset of the Civil War, Stevens enlisted as 1st Surgeon of the Louisiana 2nd Infantry. By war's end, he had been promoted to Medical Director of the Corps of General John B. Gordon, Army of Northern Virginia, C.S.A.

After the war, Stevens returned to Louisiana and in 1869 he married Mary Armstrong, daughter of Methodist minister,

Samuel Armstrong. Faced with the economic stagnation of Reconstruction, the Stevens and Armstrong families relocated to the small frontier city of Dallas, Texas. Stevens bought hundreds of acres of land in the summer of 1870, just before Dallas was hit with economic prosperity as two major railroads swerved to converge at the city. He helped finance the first iron bridge across the Trinity River, and served as a director of that highly profitably private venture. He also became active as a state delegate of the Democratic Party.

Stevens choose to build his family farmhouse on a high crest about five miles west of Dallas. One neighbor was Maximilien Reverchon a survivor of a nearby failed French utopian community called "*LaReunion*". Maximilien's son Julien Reverchon became a renowned international botanist, and the family farm, adjacent to Stevens', was his botanical garden. In 1877, newspaper accounts tell of a surgery performed by John Stevens' brother-in-law, Dr. William Hora Armstrong, attended by Dr. Stevens and six other physicians,

in which a 33 pound ovarian tumor was successfully removed. Despite success in public arenas, Stevens focused on his family and the pursuit of quieter agrarian dreams.

By 1880, his medical practice seems to have been curtailed. At the time of his sudden death in 1881, Stevens had already sold most of his Dallas real estate, but had acquired more than 1700 acres in Jack County, west of Fort Worth. Nonetheless, Stevens' family clung to his Dallas farm, and during the 1920s, his children, Annie L. Stevens and Walter Stevens, donated a large tract of it to the city for the formation of the Stevens Park Golf Course to preserve the natural beauty of Stevens' homestead site. Several local residential subdivisions, shopping centers, and an elementary school still honor his name.

Utopia Found!

1855

(From Dallas View by Gil R. Glover found at

<http://members.aol.com/GilRGlover/dallashistory2.html>)

Despite a very visible tribute, few visitors are aware that a major influence on Dallas' early development came directly from Europe. Reunion Arena, currently home to the Dallas Mavericks basketball team and Dallas Stars NHL hockey team, has hosted thousands of sporting events, concerts, circus shows, religious events, conferences, and seminars. It sits at the southwest corner of downtown Dallas, adjacent to the Hyatt Reunion Hotel complex and the Reunion Tower "ball," a sphere of hundreds of lights visible for many miles in all directions. For all its popularity and utility, the name of the Reunion complex is a mystery to most of its visitors, including locals. This is a sorry state of affairs, for the Reunion name is a tribute to one of the most interesting chapters in Dallas' early history.

In 1855, a colony of mostly French, Belgian, and Swiss settlers established a Utopian colony called La Reunion about three miles west of where Reunion Arena stands today. Ultimately ill fated, this experiment had as much impact on the development of Dallas as any other single episode in the city's history.

The La Reunion colonists were followers of the French philosopher Francois Marie Charles Fourier, who taught that a specific approach to communal living could provide general abundance and quality of life for all. Fourier's ideal was not communistic, but was based on principles of a well-ordered communal production and distribution system that would result in a profit. Private property ownership was considered a viable right within these colonies, and government was based on a democratic voting system that included women. Followers of Fourier and similar idealists in the early nineteenth century established more than 40 such colonies in America. The La Reunion community was one of the later of these colonies to be established, and its failure came near the end of the Fourier movement in America.

The primary founder of La Reunion was Victor



Of Historical Note

Considerant of Lyons, France, a leader in the Fourierist movement in Europe. Considerant was contacted in France by agents of the Peters Colony, and later visited America after having been exiled from France for protesting Napoleon's Roman expedition. Considerant persuaded a prominent Fourierist already in America, Albert Brisbane - father of noted journalist Arthur Brisbane - to accompany him to the "Three Forks" area of Texas to view the land so wonderfully described by the Peters Colony promoters. He was sufficiently enamored of the possibilities of the area that he returned to Europe and assembled the investors and adventurers who would become the La Reunion colonists.

In advance of the main migration of colonists, Considerant sent agent Francois Cantegral to purchase a 2,000 acre tract of land just west of the Trinity River at Dallas for \$7.00 per acre. The first 200 or so colonists then sailed to America, first entering Texas at the port of Houston. This is where things began to unravel, and it is a wonder La Reunion was ever established at all. The colonists arrived in Houston believing they could travel to Dallas via the Trinity River. Well, now. Instead, most of the colonists had to walk the 250 miles to the promised land with their goods, and perhaps a few of the weaker travelers, piled in ox carts. They arrive in the Dallas area on April 22, 1855. The date should be celebrated as a local holiday, but isn't.

The arrival of this main party of new settlers amounted to more than a 50 percent increase in the Dallas area population, for there were something less than 400 settlers in and near Dallas at the time. But far more importantly, the La Reunion settlers were a radically different type of people in terms of culture, language, history, philosophy, and, most important of all, in skills and professions. Whereas most of the earlier Dallas settlers had been farmers and adventurers with a few professionals thrown into the mix, the La Reunion settlers were a collection of skilled tradesmen, craftsmen, artists, and professionals the likes of which had never been seen in the northern half of Texas.

La Reunion's ranks included tailors, shoemakers, milliners, and jewelers. There were watchmakers, weavers, vintners, brew masters and storekeepers. The colony even included naturalists, philosophers, musicians, dance masters, and poets. Among the more practical skills for a frontier settlement, there were chefs, butchers, candle and soap makers. What La Reunion did not have in ample supply, however, were farmers and stockmen. Nor did they have strong leadership - Considerant was much more a social experimenter than a taskmaster, administrator, or leader of men.

The land purchased by Considerant was far from the best available in the area for farming in any case, but it was probably serviceable if the La Reunion colonists had been skilled farmers. In fact, decent wheat and vegetable crops were brought in by the colonists, but often these did not coincide with market demands in the region, and colonists' idealistic

approach to the marketplace probably made trade and barter with other locals difficult.

Still, it was the forces of nature that ultimately doomed the great social experiment at La Reunion. Mankind has never been a match for the forces of nature - a theme as old as mythology and as current as today's headlines.

The La Reunion colonists had no doubt imagined a gentle climate; instead they encountered the extremes of North Texas. In 1856, the area suffered a blizzard in May - an occurrence that had never been recorded before and hasn't happened since. Early gardens were completely destroyed. The following winter was so harshly cold that the Trinity River froze solid. This was followed by a bleak summer of severe drought and a plague of grasshoppers.

By 1860, more than 350 colonists had come to La Reunion from Europe, but the settlement was already in full decline. Some returned to Europe or moved on to other areas in America, but many moved into the rapidly growing town of Dallas and brought their trades and professions with them. This infusion of talent and diverse culture set Dallas apart from any other raw frontier town within hundreds of miles in any direction. Added to an already bustling commerce and the wide range of services and diversions available in Dallas by 1860, incorporation of the La Reunion colonists immediately increased the richness of the town's cultural and economic tapestry. Whole new markets were created and served for decades to come by these original La Reunion colonists. This, perhaps as much as any other factor, insured Dallas' growth into a dynamic regional market center by the time of the Civil War.

Most of the area occupied by the original La Reunion farmlands has long since been blasted away for its rich deposits of limestone. In fact, there are virtually no visual reminders that the colony ever existed. A small memorial sits on the back of a tee box at Stevens Park Golf Course...it can be seen from Hampton Boulevard just south of Ft. Worth Avenue. Further west on Ft. Worth Avenue near Cockrell Hill, a few graves of LaReunion colonists can still be found in the old Fishtrap Cemetery.

But there are some other reminders, perhaps the best known being Reverchon Park. Named for La Reunion's most famous resident, botanist and naturalist Julien Reverchon, the park is located in the Oak Lawn/Turtle Creek area just north of downtown Dallas. Reverchon received recognition throughout America and Europe for his botanical studies in north Texas, and eventually became a professor of botany at Baylor University College of Medicine and Pharmacy in Dallas. His botanical collections were acquired by the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri. Reverchon was inspired and tutored by Jacob Boll, a late arrival in the LaReunion community who was himself an accomplished botanist and pharmacist. Boll did get a street named after him, but no park.

Typical of the LaReunion colonists who moved into Dallas or to other nearby towns was a Monsieur Mondriel, who opened the first brewery in Dallas, and a Swiss member of the



Of Historical Note

colony, Jacob Nussbaumer, who operated the town's first butcher shop. Another French colonist, Maxime Guillot, opened a carriage factory in Dallas that grew to manufacturing plant status and continued in operation for 50 years. In effect, the LaReunion colonists helped create entirely new markets by operating on both sides of the supply and demand equation. It was a theme that would be repeated in years to come on much larger scales by much larger forces - railroads and oil for example - but the LaReunion impact was a unique and priceless boost to a frontier city in the early days of Texas.

How It All Began

(Taken from several sources, including articles written by Stevens Park Village resident Wells Ebers and Kathie Magers, editor of the Oak Cliff Tribune.)

In 1854 the state legislature authorized Alexander Cockrell (who had married Oak Cliff pioneer Enoch Horton's daughter Sarah in 1847) to build the first bridge across the Trinity at the foot of Commerce. The 520-foot toll bridge opened a year later.

In 1858, the bridge washed away after heavy rains, and Sarah Cockrell resurrected a ferry business to transport travelers across the Trinity River.

With the arrival of the new settlers, Cockrell renewed her work toward construction of her iron bridge, which was unveiled in 1872.

Her insistence that the bridge stay in private hands and that there be a charge, created negative feelings toward Oak Cliff.

In 1882, Dallas County purchased Sarah Cockrell's bridge and opened it to the public for free.

Until the mid-1930s, the most traversed route to Fort Worth from East and North Dallas began at the intersection of Houston and Commerce Streets downtown.

Motorists would proceed south on Houston Street, passing the Union Terminal and Ferris Plaza, two prominent landmarks at the time, and enter the Houston Street viaduct.

Crossing into Oak Cliff, they would follow Zang Boulevard to West Davis. After a right turn onto Davis, it was almost a straight drive to Fort Worth, passing through the cities of Grand Prairie, Arlington, and Handley.

However, with the increase of population and vehicular traffic in the 1930s, this route to Fort Worth became over-burdened.

Access to the Oak Cliff area, via Commerce Street, had become more accessible, and a route was surveyed from near downtown at Commerce to intersect with Davis west of Westmoreland. This route was known as the Fort Worth Cut-Off, and it was paved, at least in part, with red brick.

During this time, Fort Worth Avenue had a reputation for being plagued by "highwaymen" who would hold up

vehicles and rob their passengers. The Barrow brothers (including Clyde of Bonnie and Clyde) and other toughs from the nearby community of Eagle Ford also staked a claim to this area. Clyde is buried in Fort Worth Avenue's historic — though neglected — Western Heights Cemetery today.

With the advent of the automobile culture of the mid-20th century, the Fort Worth "Cut Off" became the principle gateway to the west.

Automotive and tourism-related businesses sprung up along the way, including many popular motor hotels or motels.

Run-down motel properties and used car dealerships (many of which appear to mask illegal business) are all that remain of the glorious hey day of Fort Worth Avenue.

As transportation needs increased, other routes to Fort Worth became available, and the "Cut Off" became an inter-city traffic artery that is now Fort Worth Avenue.

The construction of the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike, now I-30 and called the Tom Landry Highway, was the final blow to Fort Worth Avenue's vitality.

Fort Worth Avenue's red bricks have long since been paved over and the quaint motor courts such as the Ranch, the Mission and the Alamo face uncertain futures.

However, you can still see the red brick peeking through sometimes as a reminder of the history of Fort Worth Avenue.



Memories

(Taken from several sources.)

Oak Cliff resident Robert Hosea writes, "I remember Sivill's (drive-in) with the car-hops on roller skates. I remember The Torch Greek restaurant, the Robert Hall men's clothing store and the Bronco Bowl... when it was only a bowling alley."

"I remember all the motels and motor courts where the traveling salesmen would stay during January and July market at Fair Park — then called the Home Furnishings Mart — especially the motel on the northwest corner of Sylvan and Fort Worth Avenue (now Travel Inn)."

"It was a big deal in 1953, especially with the restaurant it had at that time."

Our thanks to Bob for his fond recollections of a time that was mid-20th century America.

Stevens Park Estates resident Ralph Churchill, who grew up in the Western Heights neighborhood, recently told us how Fort Worth Avenue used to be lined with homes as far west as Vilbig. "After that, it was pretty much farmland, he



Of Historical Note

adds”

His childhood home still remains at 1007 Fort Worth Avenue although, sadly, the property has fallen into other less-caring hands today.

Tell us your story!

(By Rafael Ciordia, FWADG Board)

In order to add context to the Fort Worth Avenue Development Group’s vision for the future, I volunteered to research the rich history of the corridor. Specifically, I wanted to understand and share its origins and the historical places that are suggested by the markers along the avenue.

I’d previously read *The Hidden City* by Bill Minutaglio and Holly Williams. In reviewing the book again -- specifically looking for clues about the history and development of Fort Worth Avenue -- I chanced upon tidbits from my own neighborhood, Kidd Springs, an area once known as Honey Springs. The book also informed me that Lake Cliff was the repository of the wonderful artesian water that flowed from springs in these parts. Thomas Marsalis chartered the Oak Cliff Water Supply Company to market these pure, clear waters of Oak Cliff to quarters in Dallas whose water tasted “as



a tall glass of water scooped from the Trinity on a hot August morning”.

Well, some things haven’t changed.

Our contemporary landmarks have changed in the 160 years that separate us from the Peter’s Colonists who came to this area.

Consider that we define our spaces by the highway systems, roads and neighborhoods -- and not the lay of the land and arteries of water that surround us -- and certainly not the original settlements. It was the Trinity itself and the creeks that snake about our neighborhoods that were the reason for the development.

After all, according to Minutaglio and Williams, Oak Cliff “became for many people, the last stop before crossing the Trinity toward Oklahoma. The prairie outpost, with its bluffs, clear creeks and natural springs, lacked only the architect on the order of [John Nealy] Bryan to boost its economic development. [William Henry] Hord [an original Oak Cliff pioneer] was not inclined in that direction. He settled into the role of rural patriarch, someone willing to offer advice, education moral direction and occasional justice.”

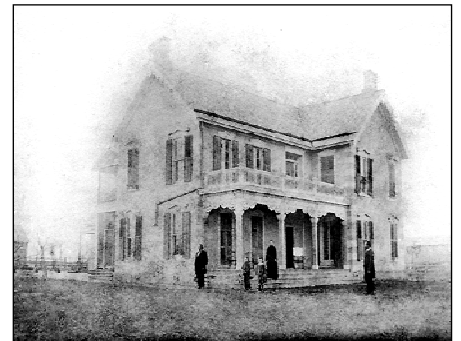
I have only recently begun to pay attention to the presence of these once vital creeks mostly hidden in dense foliage. I pass right over parts of Coombs Creek every day.

The same Coombs Creek that was used for the baptism of worshipers from the Western Heights Church of Christ in the late 1870’s. (Incidentally, the church is one of the historical sites that is marked off of Fort Worth Avenue.) The importance of the creeks cannot be overstated to modern day readers. Imagine that in addition to drinking water, the clear creeks and gushing cold springs provided crop irrigation, bathing and water-power for the important grist mills that provided flour for the weeks baking.

Crossing the Trinity to go to Eatzi’s for a fresh baguette was just not feasible in the 1860’s. Suddenly, the slow drip in my enclosed tiled shower stall is not nearly as aggravating as the thought of having to clean up in the frigid waters of the Cedar Creek on a crisp fall morning.

The history of Fort Worth Avenue cannot be taken out of the context of the development of the area. The development of the Fort Worth Cut-Off, as it was once known, follows the twists of fate of the North Oak Cliff itself. In order to understand its history, let us together, gather the many facts and stories into a complete whole.

The Fort Worth Avenue Development Group encourages the many “experts” to share their insights and research. To long-time residents, particularly those who might have owned business on Fort Worth Avenue or shopped at Steven’s Park Golf Shop or Mac Neil’s Dress shop or had lunch at Zanick’s Sylvan Café or the Blue Goose Grill in 1945, or any of the many other merchants, services and hotels... we’d love to hear about your experiences.



Old photographs that capture the “look” of the Avenue or the neighborhoods adjacent to the Avenue may be shared so they can be digitally scanned for posterity. Once we have grouped the facts and images into logical periods, future articles will be used to showcase our findings.

Please send stories, pictures (they will be returned) or contacts to:

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Or to: **rciordia@swbell.net**

If sending attachments by e-mail, please include “FWA History” in the subject line.

History notes compiled by Randall White. Some materials, specifically those regarding the William Myers section of northern Oak Cliff, can be attributed to Stevens Park Estates resident Jim

Barnes and may be seen at

<http://laurissa.com/Stevens/Contents.htm>