

Weldon G. Cannon History Files

BEDFORD REUNION

In this folder donated to the City of Euless, labeled BEDFORD REUNION, are a few key documents and other materials from files donated to The University of Texas at Arlington for the Weldon G. Cannon Euless Collection in the Special Collections of the University Library. Following is a brief summary of materials in each folder under this subject that were donated to UTA:

1. BEDFORD REUNION

Folder contents

A work file of varied materials, with narrative; the application for a Texas Historical Marker was approved and the marker placed at the Bedford Cemetery in 2002; accompanies other Bedford Reunion files; 1/4".

2. ATTENDANCE REGISTERS

Folder contents

Names of those who attended, mainly in 1950s and 1960s; accompanies other Bedford Reunion files; 1".

3. NEWSPAPERS

Folder contents

Photocopies of all articles found in newspapers of Arlington, Fort Worth, Dallas, and a few other places; accompanies other Bedford Reunion files; 3/4".

4. REUNION SPEAKERS

Folder contents

List of speakers, most years 1915-1959; accompanies other Bedford Reunion files; ¼."

5. CHAIRMEN

Folder contents

List of chairmen, most years 1915-1959; accompanies other Bedford Reunion files; 1/4".

[WGC note—Although this marker was set in Bedford, it is included here because of the proximity of Euless and Bedford and the involvement of many Euless people in the Reunion. Community dividing lines were much more fluid in the early 20th century than today.]

Texas Historical Commission staff (LCH), 8/15/02, revised 9/30/02
27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Tarrant County (Job #08102)

Location: 2401 Bedford Rd., Bedford

Subject codes: PI

UTM ref.: 14 675132E 3635388N

BEDFORD REUNION

SETTLERS FROM BEDFORD COUNTY, TENNESSEE, CAME TO THIS AREA IN THE 1870s. WELDON WILES BOBO OPENED A STORE AND GRIST MILL, AND SEVERAL FAMILIES ESTABLISHED NEW HOPE CHURCH IN 1874, ALSO USING THE BUILDING AS A SCHOOL. THE POST OFFICE OPENED IN 1877, AND, IN 1882, RESIDENTS ESTABLISHED BEDFORD COLLEGE, A PRIVATE COLLEGE THAT ALSO SERVED AS A PUBLIC COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

A PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTION, WITH GRADUATES BECOMING LEADERS IN MANY FIELDS, THE COLLEGE HELD ITS FIRST TERM AT NEW HOPE CHURCH. MANY CHURCH FOUNDERS WERE ALSO COLLEGE TRUSTEES, INCLUDING BOBO, MILTON MOORE, BENJAMIN J. VALENTINE AND RICHARD T. VALENTINE.

THE SCHOOL BURNED IN 1894 AND NEVER REOPENED. IN 1912, THOUGH, APPROXIMATELY 500 PEOPLE MET ON THE GROUNDS OF NEW HOPE CHURCH, WHICH BY THEN WAS KNOWN ALSO AS BEDFORD CHURCH OF CHRIST. THERE THEY HELD THE FIRST BEDFORD REUNION, FILLING THE DAY WITH SERMONS, MUSIC, FOOD AND REMINISCING. M.H. MOORE AND LEE M. HAMMOND ORGANIZED THE FIRST GATHERING, AND THE REUNION BECAME AN ANNUAL EVENT, WITH CROWDS IN THE THOUSANDS. PARTICIPANTS BUILT A TABERNACLE IN 1915 AND USED IT UNTIL 1958, WHEN A NEW CHURCH BUILDING WAS ERECTED. WITH DWINDLING ATTENDANCE, THOUGH, THE LAST REUNION WAS IN 1969.

DURING THE 58 YEARS OF BEDFORD REUNIONS, WHICH BECAME MORE ABOUT COMMUNITY HISTORY THAN ABOUT BEDFORD COLLEGE, EDUCATORS, MINISTERS AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS, INCLUDING TWO CONGRESSMEN, DELIVERED SPEECHES TO THE CROWDS. AREA NEWSPAPERS COVERED REUNION HIGHLIGHTS, AND THROUGH THESE STORIES AND THE MEMORIES OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED THE LATER REUNIONS, BEDFORD'S EARLY HISTORY IS REMEMBERED.

(2002)

THE BEDFORD REUNION

Bedford, Texas

By Weldon G. Cannon

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By Weldon G. Cannon, Ph.D.

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On Sunday, August 25, 1912, about 500 people braved the summer heat to gather on a rocky hill at Bedford, Texas, to recall bygone days in the community. Some were alumni of Bedford College, a small but prestigious institution that flourished for about 10 years in the late 1800s. Also at the gathering were pioneer settlers of Bedford, a Northeast Tarrant County community settled more than 50 years earlier. The crowd met under a large tent erected among sprawling oak trees on the grounds of the New Hope Church of Christ (also called New Hope Christian Church or Bedford Church of Christ), where the college held its first sessions in 1882. M. H. Moore, superintendent of North Fort Worth public schools, preached at the 11 a.m. church service, as he had done at least one Sunday each month for several years. A Bedford native and college alumnus, Moore belonged to one of the community's founding families.

Following the church service, attendees spread food on long tables under the tent for a "basket dinner." When everyone had eaten and after the dishes were cleared, the crowd reassembled for singing and speech making. The assembly sang from "Popular Hymns," a book of gospel songs used at Bedford 20 years earlier. Tarrant County School Superintendent Lee M. Hammond, another Bedford native and college graduate, delivered the main afternoon address,

relating humorous incidents from his college days. Several other alumni spoke on the theme, "Old School Days at Bedford." The participants were educators, physicians, politicians and other prominent citizens, all members of pioneer Bedford families — the Bobos, Trimbles, Valentines and Moores. M. H. Moore and Lee M. Hammond deserve credit as founders of the Reunion.

At 4 p.m., the college alumni met under the tent to establish a permanent organization. After Professor Hammond outlined the purposes of an association, everyone endorsed his proposals and elected him president. Following dismissal, college chums, cousins and friends said their goodbyes and vowed to return the next year. They left as they had come, by wagon, buggy, automobile and train.¹

The 1912 gathering was the start of the Bedford Reunion, which for the next 58 years served as an occasion for old-timers to recall and relive the community's history and to share it with younger generations. The reunion evolved into an annual affirmation and reinforcement of the belief that Bedford had a heritage worthy of being preserved. United States Congressman Fritz Lanham in the keynote address at the 1924 reunion summed up the importance of the annual gathering, not only for that year but also for the reunion throughout its course. He praised the courageous Bedford men and women, most of them refugees from the devastated post-Civil War South, who came to Texas to farm, to establish businesses, to rear families and to create institutions such as Bedford College. Lanham turned to the young people in the crowd of 1,000 people and

¹ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912.

reminded them that they had the responsibility and obligation of carrying on the work started by their forebears. "And with this type of young manhood and young womanhood assembled here today," he concluded, "we can rest assured that the principles for which these old people struggled will be perpetuated." Throughout the history of the Bedford Reunion, those principles, indeed, were maintained.²

Bedford, Texas, began in about 1870, when Weldon Wiles Bobo settled in Tarrant County, 17 miles northeast of Fort Worth, opening a store and a gristmill. In 1874, several families living near the store established the New Hope Church, erecting a building on property donated by Milton Moore, father of M. H. Moore. The building doubled as a school. When a post office opened in 1877, it was named for Bedford County, Tennessee, home of the Bobos and several other pioneer families. Bedford was the central community for approximately 100 square miles of Tarrant County that today basically is encompassed by the Hurst-Eules-Bedford school district. The population of the entire area was about 2,000. Most people made their living by farming.³

Community leaders established Bedford College in 1882 to enhance educational opportunities for their children. Operating as a private institution that collected tuition from students, it offered college and university preparatory courses, promptly garnering an excellent educational reputation. The school even

² Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 8, 1924.

³ George Green, Hurst, Eules and Bedford: Heart of the Metroplex, An Illustrated History (Austin: Eakin Press, 1995), pp. 13-16; Janet Schmelzer, Where the West Begins: Fort Worth and Tarrant County (Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985), pp. 51-52; U. S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Tarrant County, Texas, pp. 143-165.

attracted out-of-state students. At the same time, it served as a public community school for younger children. The college soon erected its own building nearby on another tract of land donated by Milton Moore. After several years of successful operation, however, disaster struck on June 2, 1894, when the building burned. The college never reopened.⁴

The first reunion in 1912 was held the last Sunday in August to correspond approximately with the opening day of the college's first session in 1882. From 1913 until 1934, the reunion met on the first Sunday in September. In 1935, the gathering met the first Sunday in October and thereafter always on the third Sunday of September. Why the organizers choose a Sunday for the reunion is unknown, since it was originally a college and community, not a church, event. However, the organizers had grown up in the New Hope Church and still had families living in Bedford. They often attended church there on Sundays and visited with relatives. To the gathering's founders, the morning worship and the afternoon reunion were both part of the day's activities.⁵

Although the first reunion was held under a tent erected for the occasion, a brush arbor was built on the site for the 1913 gathering. In 1914, the reunion was

⁴ Glenn M. Holden, "A Partial History of Education in Tarrant County", M. A. Thesis, Texas Christian University, 1931, pp. 41-44; "Charter of Bedford College," MS, Texas Secretary of State, Austin, Texas; Patricia Helvey, "Bedford School," MS, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas; Michael Patterson, "Bedford Church of Christ," MS, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas; The Fort Worth Daily Gazette, June 5, 1894; The Dallas Morning News, June 5, 1894; The Fort Worth Press, September 21, 1958.

⁵ The Fort Worth Daily Gazette, March 1, 1893; April 5, 1893; May 31, 1893; May 16, 1894; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; September 7, 1913; Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 5, 1927; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 1, 1934; September 26, 1935; October 7, 1935; September 15, 1936; North Fort Worth News, October 28, 1938.

held in the church building, which proved totally inadequate with its maximum capacity of about 150. In 1915, a tabernacle large enough to accommodate several hundred reunion attendees was erected on the east side of the church grounds. The sturdy, rectangular, open-sided structure had strong cedar post supports and was covered with fine cedar roof shingles. An open clerestory at the peak of the roof vented the summer heat. The 1957 reunion was the last get-together in the tabernacle. Late that year or in early 1958, it was torn down when a new church building was erected on the site of the 1874 church building. Subsequent reunions were held in the new church building.⁶

College ex-students planned the reunion in 1912 and formed the alumni association. But since most of them had once called Bedford home and many of them had moved to other parts of Texas, or even out of state, they also considered it a reunion of old settlers and pioneers. Over the years, as alumni died, the annual gathering gradually lost its college emphasis. An announcement in 1920 confirmed that it was no longer primarily for former students but had also become a general community reunion. Attendees at the 1922 reunion seriously considered discontinuing the gathering since many of those who had attended the college, as well as Bedford old settlers, were aging or had passed away. They decided, however, to continue it as an annual memorial service for those who had died. The last time it was referred to as an ex-student or alumni reunion was 1924.

⁶ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 15, 1915; The Grapevine Sun, August 28, 1915; Interview with Frank Driskill by Weldon G. Cannon, April 12, 2000, Fruitvale, Texas; Interview with Joe Driskill by Weldon G. Cannon, October 7, 2000, Grapevine, Texas; Interview with Kenneth Chrismon by Weldon G. Cannon, July 22, 2001, Bedford, Texas.

Thereafter, it was occasionally called the Bedford Homecoming, sometimes the Bedford Old Settlers Reunion, but most often simply “the Bedford Reunion.” In 1931, attendees again discussed discontinuing the annual meeting but decided to keep going.⁷

Although short-lived, Bedford College was a prestigious institution, and many of its graduates became outstanding leaders in education, medicine, business, politics, farming and other endeavors. Consequently, a large group of well-educated, influential people and successful college alumni valued the fine education they received there. Among graduates of Bedford College were M. H. Moore, superintendent of North Fort Worth and Fort Worth public schools; Lee M. Hammond, Tarrant County School superintendent and co-founder of Arlington College, now the University of Texas at Arlington; Dr. William M. Trimble, co-founder with Hammond of Arlington College, and Tarrant County physician and Fort Worth city physician; John M. Moore, Tarrant County treasurer; Jesse M. Brown, Hugh L. Small and I. T. Valentine, all Tarrant County judges; Hugh Hightower, Tarrant County commissioner; J. E. Valentine, superintendent of the Knights of Pythias Home in Weatherford; Ben M. Terrell, district judge; a Dr. Gilbert, physician in Irving; Dr. J. E., Bobo, physician in Topeka, Kansas; and many other accomplished professional and business people.

⁷ Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 3, 1928; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; September 4, 1912; July 21, 1915; September 6, 1920; September 8, 1924; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 20, 1941; September 21, 1942; The Grapevine Sun, September 10, 1931; September 18, 1941.

The reunion format remained basically the same throughout the 58 years. Some people came at 10 a.m. for “meeting and greeting.” Others came for the regular worship in the church building at 11 a.m., a traditional service in the style of the Church of Christ – preaching, communion, prayers and a cappella singing. M. H. Moore preached the Sunday morning sermon every year through 1938, when he died suddenly in October. Many more people assembled on the church grounds or under the tabernacle while the church service was still under way. Others timed their arrival to coincide with the end of morning worship. In the early afternoon, dinner, as it was called for many years, was spread on long tables under the tabernacle. Food had been lovingly prepared in home kitchens and brought in picnic baskets and boxes. Residents of Bedford and nearby parts of northeastern Tarrant County were considered to be hosts and were expected to bring enough food for their families and out-of-town guests. Accounts usually reported an abundance of food for everyone. But on a few occasions reunion announcements carried urgent pleas for local residents to prepare enough food for out-of-town guests, implying that there had not been enough the previous year. Barrels of drinking water, great quantities of ice tea and soft drinks were available for thirsty visitors on the usually hot, dry late summer day. By 2 p.m., the eating was ended, food cleared away and tables moved out. The wooden pews were arranged to face an elevated rostrum with a lectern located on the east side of the tabernacle. The reunion chairman, who had been elected the preceding year,

called the meeting to order and made a few introductory remarks. Then the activities began in earnest.⁸

A vital part of every reunion was music -- usually congregational singing of familiar hymns and gospel songs and presentations by quartets, choruses and other special groups that were organized as families, communities, churches, schools or other groupings. The 1917 gathering featured "good music by local talent." In 1919 and several times in the 1920s, Sam Losh led the congregational singing and organized special musical presentations. A professor at Texas Christian University and a successful Fort Worth music teacher who had trained a number of professional musicians, Losh was in great demand as a director of musical programs around North Texas. On at least two occasions in the 1920s, Sacred Harp singers presented programs. The Fort Worth WPA Recreation Department Orchestra played for the 1936 and 1937 reunions. The 1940 music program featured presentations by two singing groups -- the Fort Worth Junior Chamber of Commerce Men's Chorus and the chorus of the North Side Church of Christ, home congregation of reunion chairman Will Day, as well as M. H. Moore and many other former Bedfordites who lived in Fort Worth. A quartet, a trio and a duet also sang. In some years, the music was congregational singing, often led by Calvin Moore, son of M. H. Moore. For many years, a heavy upright piano

⁸ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 25, 1912; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, October 2, 1935; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 19, 1938; September 17, 1951; Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 3, 1927; September 5, 1927; September 3, 1928; North Fort Worth News, October 29, 1938; The Grapevine Sun, August 15, 1914; August 27, 1925; August 31, 1933; The Arlington Journal, August 31, 1928; September 15, 1939; Interview with Evelyn Wilkerson (Mrs. Walter) Fitch by Weldon G. Cannon, April 14, 1999, Bedford, Texas; Interview with Lynn Cannon by Weldon G. Cannon, March 9, 1998, Hurst, Texas.

from the home of Will and Nora Bobo Fitch was moved to the rostrum. It was all right to use a piano for musical accompaniment, even for hymn singing, since this was not a church worship service.⁹

A featured speaker almost always delivered a principal address, usually on a patriotic theme, a current event or a moral or religious issue. On at least four occasions U. S. congressmen spoke -- Fritz G. Lanham in 1924 , 1927 and 1935, and Jim Wright in 1957. State Senator Julien C. Hyer spoke in 1929. State Judges sometimes addressed the assembly and ministers often spoke, usually from the Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Methodist Church or Baptist Church. One year, a presiding elder of the Methodist Church spoke. Educators, especially school superintendents and college professors, also delivered addresses. In 1919, M. H. Moore, who preached the Sunday morning church sermon, was also the featured afternoon speaker.¹⁰

Even though there was no featured speaker some years, there was still plenty of speech-making by attendees. A key part of every reunion was

⁹ The Arlington Journal, August 17, 1917; September 20, 1940; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 6, 1919; September 7, 1919; September 5, 1920; September 6, 1920; September 7, 1925; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 17, 1936; September 20, 1937; September 16, 1940; September 17, 1945; September 17, 1951; The Grapevine Sun, September 2, 1926; August 22, 1929; August 31, 1933; August 30, 1934; September 17, 1936; September 24, 1936; September 16, 1937; Interview with Evelyn Wilkerson (Mrs. Walter) Fitch by Weldon Cannon, April 14, 1999, Bedford, Texas.

¹⁰ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; September 6, 1919; September 8, 1919; The Grapevine Sun, September 2, 1926; August 22, 1929; August 31, 1933; August 30, 1934; October 10, 1935; September 20, 1951; September 17, 1978; The Arlington Journal, August 23, 1929; September 13, 1940; September 19, 1941; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 16, 1951; September 16, 1957; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 16, 1946; September 17, 1951; September 14, 1957; Reunion Register, September 15, 1957, MS, Bedford Historical Foundation Archives, Old

reminiscing. While most of this was one-on-one or in small groups, sometimes it was part of a planned, organized program. Nearly always, some time was set aside in each program for unplanned and extemporaneous comments, giving everyone a chance to say something. People often spoke of their earlier life in Bedford or their family's connection with the community.¹¹

Sometimes the programs featured organized presentations of Bedford history. At the first reunion in 1912, "Old School Days at Bedford" was the subject of speeches by six former college students. The 1917 gathering, also rich in historical reminiscing, featured talks on "The Times of Our Young Lives at Bedford," "The Pioneers Who Paved the Way" and "An Analysis of What This Community has Wrought." A historian would have found a gold mine of information at the 1934 reunion, listening to speeches about "Bedford During and Immediately After the Civil War" and "History of the New Hope Church" by John Moore, brother of M. H. Moore and Tarrant County Treasurer for many years, and a presentation by Lee M. Hammond on "Bedford Schools and School Teachers." Unfortunately, most of these speeches have been lost. However, much of John Moore's history was preserved in a 1939 article, "Bedford Church of Christ," that appeared in a weekly Tarrant County newspaper.¹²

Bedford School, Bedford, Texas; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Mid-Cities Edition, September 8, 1966; The Fort Worth Press, September 20, 1959.

¹¹ Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 5, 1927; September 3, 1928; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 8, 1924; The Grapevine Sun, September 1, 1927; September 1, 1932; Weldon G. Cannon Diary, 1963, MS, in possession of Weldon G. Cannon, Temple, Texas.

¹² Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; The Arlington Journal, August 17, 1917; The Grapevine Sun, Aug. 30, 1934; October 10, 1935; Tarrant County Citizen, [1939], undated newspaper clipping, Bedford Public Library, Bedford, Texas.

Another memorable reunion year was 1928 when the Fort Worth Record-Telegram reported that a short program ceded importance to hours of attendees relating "I Remember When It _____." M. H. Moore, Superintendent of Fort Worth Public Schools since 1915, preached at the 11 a.m. church service on the topic of "Faith." For the afternoon program following lunch, Court of Civil Appeals Judge R. H. Buck from Fort Worth spoke about "Old Times." A Tarrant County resident since 1877, J. R. Fuller of Euless gave a brief memoir. He was a native of the Tennessee neighborhood that was home to many other families that settled in Bedford and Euless--Trigg, Bobo, Euless, Cannon, Himes, Green, Jernigan, Whitener, Wisner, Redden and others. J. W. Mixon, a singing school instructor who had lived in Bedford for more than 30 years, performed. Former Bedford residents more than 80 years old were introduced, including A. J. "Jack" Day who had lived in northeastern Tarrant County since 1857. County Treasurer Moore read a list of charter members of the New Hope Church in 1874, including members of the Bobo, Bearden, Valentine, Redman, Childress, Moore, Cannon, Trimble, Russell and Brown families. D. S. Harris then led the assembly in singing a venerable hymn "We Speak of the Realms of the Blest" in their memory. Four of the charter members were also organizers of the college in 1882 -- Milton Moore, Weldon Wiles Bobo, Benjamin J. Valentine and Richard T. Valentine. Former teacher and minister W. H. Wright of Dallas, now blind, missed the reunion for the first time in many years, but sent greetings. More than

1,000 people attended, including visitors from as far away as Missouri and Kentucky. Many stayed until dusk.¹³

A key feature of most reunions was the introduction of special guests. Until the late 1920s, former teachers or graduates of the college who had become prominent citizens or professional people were always recognized. Often they were on the program, speaking briefly about their experiences at Bedford. In the 1940s, as the number of ex-students and old settlers rapidly dwindled and many of those remaining lived far away from Bedford, it became a common practice to introduce the oldest in attendance and those who had traveled the farthest. Sometimes the oldest man and the oldest woman were introduced, and occasionally, the youngest attendees.¹⁴

A list of pioneers who had died within the last year was often read. The 1922 reading, really a list of founders of the Reunion who had died since 1912, sounded like a roll call of old Bedford families: Mrs. W. W. Bobo, Mrs. Green Cannon, Dr. William Trimble, Professor W. H. Kimbrough, John Cannon, J. Ed Valentine, Dr. J. E. Bobo and J. H. Bobo.¹⁵

The reunion was also an important social occasion and people dressed accordingly. Photographs from various years reveal that women wore fine dresses,

¹³ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 30, 1928; September 3, 1928; Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 3, 1928.

¹⁴ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; July 21, 1915; September 6, 1920; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 16, 1951; The Arlington Journal, August 17, 1917; August 23, 1929; September 20, 1940; The Grapevine Sun, August 15, 1914; September 17, 1978.

¹⁵ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 4, 1922.

hats almost always and gloves often. Men wore suits and neckties, even though the weather was usually hot.¹⁶

For many years, Mr. and Mrs. William H. Wright, a particularly influential and beloved couple, attended and often appeared on the program. They both taught at the Bedford school in the late 1870s and early 1880s, even before the college was established. He was minister at the New Hope Church at the same time. After leaving Bedford, he established the First Christian Church of Arlington, served as minister of the First Christian Church of Dallas (now the Highland Oaks Church of Christ) and was widely recognized as an important leader among Texas Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and Churches of Christ. His wife, Francina Alice Barkley Wright, was a daughter of Dr. Benjamin F. Barkley, prominent citizen of Birdville, first county seat of Tarrant County. In 1867, when most men were disqualified from holding office because they had supported the Confederacy, 15-year-old Alice Barkley was appointed postmistress at Birdville. Bedford ex-students and old settlers always looked forward to the Wrights' reminiscences.¹⁷

¹⁶ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 6, 1924; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning, September 17, 1945; September 22, 1947; September 19, 1949; September 17, 1951; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening, September 17, 1945; Winnie Day (Mrs. Ross) Cannon photo album, in possession of Weldon Cannon, Temple, Texas.

¹⁷ The Grapevine Sun, August 15, 1914; September 2, 1926; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 21, 1915; September 8, 1919; September 6, 1920; September 7, 1925; The Arlington Journal, August 17, 1917; The Christian Courier, July 23, 1931, p. 12; Ron Tyler, Editor in Chief, The New Handbook of Texas (Austin: The Texas State Historical Association, 1996), v. 1, p. 383; Record of Appointments of Postmasters, Tarrant County, Texas, 1850-1877, National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.; Julia Kathryn Garrett, Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph (Austin: The Encino Press, 1972), p. 255.

Two reunions in the 1950s were particularly noteworthy. In 1951, the 40th reunion attracted considerable newspaper coverage. More than 200 people were reported to have attended. A lengthy article, accompanied by a photograph, was published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Walter Fitch, grandson of Weldon Wiles Bobo, founder of Bedford, was reunion chairman. Vancil Wren, minister of the Bedford Church of Christ, preached the morning sermon. After lunch, the featured afternoon speaker was Dr. Cothburn O'Neal, professor at Arlington State College (now the University of Texas at Arlington), who spoke on "Propaganda Techniques." The oldest settler on hand was W. R. Mayes, 90, of Arlington. Mrs. Jim Anderson of Bedford, 82, claimed the title of oldest woman present. L. D. Rutledge, another Bedford old-timer, directed the afternoon singing. Tom Acton of Cheraw, South Carolina, traveled the longest distance to the reunion. Edna Evett (Mrs. Tom) Cannon, of Wichita Falls, but a resident of Bedford most of her life, had attended so many reunions she could not recall the exact number. Her grandnephew, Weldon Cannon of Euless, youngest regular reunion participant, knew that he had attended the annual gathering almost every one of his 17 years. Nearly 20 educators were present, including Fort Worth school Superintendent Joe P. Moore, son of M. H. Moore, and Texas Christian University professor Dr. John H. Hammond, son of Lee M. Hammond. Seven of the educators were pioneer Bedford teachers.¹⁸

¹⁸ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 16, 1951; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 17, 1951; The Grapevine Sun, September 20, 1951.

More than 300 people were reported to have attended the 1957 reunion. Chairman again was Walter Fitch, Bedford postmaster. Featured speaker was Congressman Jim Wright of Fort Worth. He was in great demand as a speaker when visiting his district, appearing on programs several times each week. Calvin Moore was elected chairman for the next year.¹⁹

Attendance varied greatly over the years, running well into the hundreds, perhaps even thousands, in the early years, but dwindling to a few dozen by the 1960s. Newspaper accounts provide figures for many years from 1912 to 1957. Eleven reunion attendance registers from the 1950s and 1960s are extant. Many newspaper accounts doubtlessly exaggerated the numbers in attendance, and some guests certainly failed to sign the registers. Nevertheless, general attendance patterns can be ascertained. Nearly 500 people reportedly attended the first reunion in 1912. Only 23 registered in 1969, the last year of the event. An estimated 2,500 attended in 1921 and several thousand in 1930. If that many actually attended, the grounds were covered with people and the narrow, unpaved country road leading to the church was jammed with vehicles. Estimates of 1,000 were reported for 1924, 1927 and 1928. Attendance in 1941 was described as the largest in its history, although no figure was given. More than 300 people were

¹⁹ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 14, 1957; Fort Worth Star Telegram, Morning Edition, September 16, 1957; Interview with Jim Wright by Weldon Cannon, October 20, 2001, Fort Worth, Texas.

reported to have attended the 1957 reunion, although only 115 signed the attendance register.²⁰

Besides visitors from throughout Texas and other states, large numbers of people from several Tarrant County cities and towns swelled the population of Bedford on reunion day. Great crowds from Fort Worth could always be expected, since many Bedford people had moved there. In 1927, several hundred were reported to have attended from Fort Worth. Because M. H. Moore and several other former Bedford citizens lived in North Fort Worth, that part of the city was always well represented. Also in 1927, so many from Grapevine attended that the local newspaper declined to name them. Another year the Grapevine Christian Church dismissed its Sunday services so that members could go to the Bedford Reunion. From neighboring Euless great numbers also came. Many Grapevine and Euless residents had kinspeople and friends in Bedford, since many pioneer families in all three towns came from the same part of Bedford County, Tennessee.²¹

The reunions received extensive coverage in Fort Worth, Arlington and Grapevine newspapers from the beginning to the early 1950s. There was no Bedford newspaper, but the Arlington and Grapevine weekly papers regularly carried news items from small communities in northeastern Tarrant County as late

²⁰ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; September 5, 1921; September 8, 1924; September 5, 1927; September 3, 1928; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 22, 1941; September 16, 1957; The Grapevine Sun, September 4, 1930; Reunion Register, 1957; Reunion Register, 1969, Bedford Historical Foundation Archives, Old Bedford School, Bedford, Texas.

²¹ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, August 26, 1912; September 8, 1919; September 3, 1923; September 5, 1927; The Grapevine Sun, September 2, 1926; September 8, 1927; The Arlington Journal, September 9, 1927, September 20, 1940; North Fort Worth News, September 9, 1938.

as the 1940s. Fort Worth newspapers also reported a remarkable amount of Bedford news. Several Bedford natives became influential professional people in Fort Worth and held important offices in city, school and county governments. Newspapers regularly carried accounts of the reunion a day or two after the gathering. Reporters and photographers from Fort Worth newspapers sometimes covered the reunion as news events.²²

Each year, the reunion was publicized in various ways. Probably the most effective method was word-of-mouth exchanges among families and friends. Since the meeting day rarely changed, people could put it on their calendars or just make a mental note to remember it each year. Some years, the reunion had a publicity chairman. The event was publicized regularly in Fort Worth, Grapevine and Arlington newspapers, usually a week or two before, but sometimes on the day of the event. In 1944, John M. Moore, publicity chairman for the year, announced through news releases that he had attended every one of the reunions, that he was 92 years old and was still driving his car and “going places.” Postcard invitations often were sent to people on a mailing list, especially to those outside Tarrant County.²³

²² Fort Worth Record-Telegram, August 31, 1929; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 8, 1924; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning, September 17, 1945; September 22, 1947; September 19, 1949; September 17, 1951; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening, September 17, 1945.; The Fort Worth Press, September 21, 1958. Most newspapers are preserved on microfilm in the Fort Worth, Arlington and Grapevine public libraries. Articles from some editions of newspapers not microfilmed are preserved in library and family history files. Unfortunately, suburban editions of the Fort Worth newspapers that would most likely have carried news of the reunions for the 1950s and 1960s were not microfilmed.

²³ Postcard Reunion Announcement, 1966, Bedford Historical Foundation Archives, Old Bedford School, Bedford, Texas; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 7, 1913; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, August 27, 1933; The Grapevine Sun, September 14, 1944; The Fort Worth Press, September 19,

Bedford is fortunate that much of its early history has been preserved through newspaper accounts of the reunion. The reminiscences of early residents as reported in newspapers add many rich details to Bedford history. Several newspaper articles are accompanied by valuable photographs of both the reunion crowd and unique views of the 1874 church building and the 1915 tabernacle. A few other photographs of the reunion from other sources also exist.²⁴

Walter Fitch and his wife, Evelyn Wilkerson Fitch, of Bedford, preserved 11 reunion attendance registers from 1950 to 1969. Most are recorded in spiral composition books; others are on unbound sheets of paper. There are problems with the registers. Some are not dated. For still others, the date appears to have been written in later. The same year is written on two of them. However, the correct year can be corroborated or determined by other means for most of them. Hence, they are an invaluable source of information for the later years when there was little newspaper coverage.²⁵

1947; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Mid-Cities Edition, September 8, 1966, clipping in local history files, Bedford Public Library, Bedford, Texas; Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 3, 1927.

²⁴ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, September 8, 1924; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, September 17, 1945; September 19, 1949; September 17, 1951; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 17, 1945; September 18, 1967; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, unidentified edition, September 22, 1947, newspaper clipping in family history files of Frances Day (Mrs. Wayne) Moyers, Granbury, Texas; Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 3, 1927; August 31, 1929; Winnie Day Cannon photo album. Photo files of the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and some early Fort Worth newspapers are preserved in the Special Collections Division of the Library of the University of Texas at Arlington.

²⁵ Reunion Register, 1950, Bedford Historical Foundation Archives, Old Bedford School, Bedford, Texas; Reunion Register, 1969; Interview with Libby Buuck by Weldon Cannon, October 6, 2000, Bedford, Texas; Evelyn Fitch interview, April 19, 1999; Interview with Randy Fitch by Weldon Cannon, September 30, 2001, Bedford, Texas. There are eleven reunion registers. The oldest, although undated, can almost certainly be assigned to 1950. The next ones are dated 1955, 1956, and 1957. There are two registers dated 1959. One of them is probably for 1958. The next one is dated 1960. Another undated register can be assigned to 1963. The last three are dated 1964, 1966 and 1969. These are all preserved in the Bedford Historical Foundation Archives at the Old Bedford School, Bedford, Texas.

From the mid-1950s until its demise, the reunion seemed to take on a new character. It had always been a college or old settlers' reunion, a community rather than a church affair. Nevertheless, the reunion had always met in and around the 1874 church building where the college began in 1882 or in the 1915 tabernacle erected near the church specifically for the reunion. Many people who were not members of the church came to Sunday morning worship, and according to most accounts, the 11 a.m. service was considered to be the opening of the reunion each year. In the late 1950s and through the 1960s, however, news releases generally had a different tone. Morning worship was rarely mentioned, and the reunion was scheduled to "begin with a picnic basket lunch at 1 p.m." followed by a program. A 1966 mailed invitation to the reunion said nothing about the church service, inviting people only to the lunch and the program. Although the morning worship and the reunion technically were always separate events, and most people who came to the afternoon reunion did not attend the church service, the organizers and early leaders seemed to consider the morning service an important part of the day's activities. This was no longer the case in later years. Ironically, beginning in 1958, the reunion program was always held in the new Bedford Church of Christ building since the tabernacle had been torn down.²⁶

The last reunion met on September 21, 1969, in the Bedford church building. There are no newspaper accounts after 1967, and the last register is for

²⁶ Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 16, 1954; September 14, 1957; September 15, 1958; September 18, 1967; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Morning Edition, August 27, 1933; September 17, 1951; September 11, 1955; September 14, 1956; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Mid-Cities Edition, September 8, 1966; Reunion Register, 1969.

1969. Although the 1915 tabernacle had been gone since 1957 or 1958, the meeting was still held on the site of the first session of Bedford College in 1882 and the site of every reunion since beginning in 1912. The two older generations were gone; the third generation was rapidly dying. There were fewer and fewer people who could return once a year to reminisce about the “olden days.” Furthermore, most people had other interests than attending reunions and reminiscing about the past. The character of Bedford was rapidly changing also. It was no longer a small, rural community, centered around a store, a school and a church. Bedford was quickly becoming a small suburban city in the middle of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, inhabited mainly by people who had moved from elsewhere and who knew little of its history.²⁷

Nevertheless, because of the college (1882-1894), the reunion (1912-1969), and the accounts and records they generated, many details of Bedford’s early history have been preserved. How fortunate it was that Bedford’s sons and daughters organized a reunion in 1912 and perpetuated it for 58 years, keeping alive the community’s history and the memory and accomplishments of their forebears.

²⁷ Reunion Register, 1969; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Evening Edition, September 18, 1967; Green, Hurst, Euless and Bedford, pp, 85, 91; Schmelzer, Where the West Begins, 93-95.

Bedford Reunion Principal Speakers

- 1912: Lee M. Hammond, Tarrant County School Superintendent
- 1919: M. H. Moore, Fort Worth School Superintendent
- 1920: W. H. Kimbrough, Judge, Amarillo
- 1921: M. H. Moore, Fort Worth School Superintendent
- 1923: E. R. Cockrell, Mayor, Fort Worth
- 1924: Fritz Lanham, U. S. Representative, Fort Worth
- 1925: James A. Clark, Former Teacher, Bedford College
- 1926: W. L. Coley, Judge, Fort Worth
- 1927: Fritz G. Lanham, U. S. Representative, Fort Worth
Sam A. Ashburn, Minister
- 1928: R. H. Buck, Court of Civil Appeals Judge
- 1929: Julien C. Hyer, State Senator, Fort Worth
- 1930: Jesse E. Martin, Candidate for District Attorney, Fort Worth
- 1931: J. C. Smith, Judge
Julien C. Hyer.
- 1933: Frank P. Culver, Presiding Elder, Methodist Episcopal Church, South
- 1934: Jesse M. Brown, Tarrant County Judge, Fort Worth
- 1935: Fritz G. Lanham, U. S. Representative, Fort Worth
- 1936: Jeff D. Ray, Professor, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth
T. M. Trimble, Principal, Arlington Heights Public Schools
- 1937: R. A. Stuart, Attorney
L. A. Woods, State Superintendent of Public Instruction
- 1938: Marvin H. Brown, Judge, Fort Worth

- 1939: Jesse Brown
Marvin H. Brown Sr.,
Mark McGee
- 1940: Goldman Drury, Minister and Y.M.C.A. staff, Fort Worth;
J. P. Moore, Principal, Polytechnic High School, Fort Worth;
John Moore, Arlington
- 1941: Walter Morris, Judge 67th District Court, Fort Worth
- 1942: Perry Gresham, Minister, University Christian Church, Fort Worth
- 1943: John M. Moore
Leslie Wright
J. P. Moore
- 1945: [A. D.] Roach, Tarrant County School Superintendent
- 1946: Goldman Drury, Minister, City-County Hospital Administrator, Fort Worth
- 1947: Walter Morris, District Attorney, Fort Worth
- 1948: Joe Moore, Fort Worth School Superintendent
- 1949: Jesse M. Brown, Attorney
- 1950: Tom Renfro, District Judge, Fort Worth
- 1951: Cothburn O'Neal, Professor, Arlington State College
- 1952: H. A. "Salty" Hull, State Representative, Fort Worth
- 1953: Cecil A. Morgan, Member, State Board of Education
- 1954: Fred Swank, Pastor, Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, Fort Worth
- 1955: L. H. "Chick" Allen, Past President, Convair Management Club
- 1956: S. T. Willis, Director of Child Accounting, Fort Worth Public Schools
- 1957: Jim Wright, U. S. Representative, Fort Worth
- 1959: A. T. DeGroot, Dean, Brite College of Bible, Texas Christian University
- 1966: James R. Scott, Minister, Methodist Church

Bedford Reunion Chairmen

1913: Lee M. Hammond

1915: J. E. Valentine

1917: I. T. Valentine

1919: J. R. Foster

1920: J. M. Moore

1921: Will Day

1923: L. M. Hammond

1925: John Moore

1926: Lee Hammond and W. M. Moore

1930: L. M. Hammond

1931: John M. Moore

1932: John M. Moore

1935: John M. Moore

1936: L. M. Hammond

1937: Terrell M. Trimble

1938: J. Calvin Moore

1939: Lee M. Hammond

1940: Will Day

1941: Will M. Moore

1942: John M. Moore

1943: Will Fitch

1945: Will Fitch

1946: Joe P. Moore

1947: Walter Fitch

1948: Walter Fitch

1949: Henry Bucher and W. M. Moore

1950: J. Calvin Moore

1951: Walter Fitch

1952: Walter Fitch

1953: Joe P. Moore

1954: Marcus Moore

1955: Calvin Moore

1956: Walter Fitch

1957: Walter Fitch

1958: Calvin Moore

1959: John H. Hammond

1966: George M. Corbett

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END

BEDFORD COLLEGE

by Weldon G. Cannon
2003, 2004, 2005

[Beginnings of a narrative to secure a Texas Historical Commission marker for Bedford College, Bedford, Texas.]

Bedford College exerted an influence far out of proportion to its duration, size and location. Founded in 1882 in a Northeast Tarrant County, Texas, rural community and lasting only until 1894, its graduates made waves across North Texas for many years. Beginning in 1912, college ex-students met yearly for a reunion. After they had all died, their descendants and others carried on the annual tradition until 1969. The college lasted only 12 years. But for 58 years, Bedford's sons and daughters relived and recorded for posterity the history of the college and the community that gave it birth.

Bedford was established about 1870 when Weldon Wiles Bobo settled in the area and opened a store and a gristmill. For several years the community was known as Bobo's Store, or simply Bobo. A post office was opened at the store in 1877 with Bobo as postmaster. Although most people in the community wanted to name it for him, he insisted that it be named Bedford, for Bedford County, Tennessee, his original home. Other families, such as the Whittens, Moores, Triggs and Eulesses, had settled in the neighborhood even before the Bobos. Other families soon followed from Bedford and adjoining Coffee County--Cannon, Himes, Green, Fuller, Redden, Whitener, Jernigan, Huffman, Wiser. Their original community center was Spring Garden, about two miles north of the site of Bobo's Store, and named for the Missouri home of the Moore and Whitten families. It was the seat of justice for precinct three in northeastern Tarrant County until 1876 and the home of a school and three churches until the community's multipurpose building burned in 1872.

[George Green, HURST, EULESS, AND BEDFORD: HEART OF THE METROPLEX, AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY, Eakin Press, Austin, Texas, 1995, pp. 13-16.]

In 1874, several families living around Bobo's Store organized a new church and erected a building nearby on Milton Moore's farm. They had doubtless continued worshipping since the loss of their Spring Garden building, perhaps in homes. But they decided they should have a church in their own community. Known originally as the New Hope Church of Church or Christian Church, by the early 1900s it was becoming known as the Bedford Church of Christ, its name today.

[Michael Patterson, "Bedford Church of Christ," Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas; Fort Worth Record-Telegram, September 3, 1928]

From the beginning the new building was also used as a community school. Before 1885, most education in Texas was provided through loosely organized community schools. These had no district boundaries or taxing authority or permanence. Under the system, a group of people living in a "community" notified the county judge that they wanted to establish a public school. Upon his approval they secured an existing building or built a new one themselves. The judge appointed trustees who managed the school and hired a teacher. After the school was organized the state provided a small amount of money for each student enrolled.

[Patterson, "Bedford Church of Christ;" GENERAL LAWS OF THE STATE OF TEXAS PASSED AT THE SESSION OF THE FIFTEENTH LEGISLATURE BEGUN AND HELD AT THE CITY OF AUSTIN, April 18th, 1876, Galveston, Shaw & Blaylock, State Printers, 1876, pp. 199-210; Glenn M. Holden, A PARTIAL HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN TARRANT COUNTY, M. A. Thesis, Texas Christian University, 1931, pp. 6-8.]

In 1882, Bedford civic leaders established Bedford College to better serve the educational needs of the community. At the time Bedford was the center for a sizeable rural community. It was one of three voting places in Northeast Tarrant County for an area bounded by the Trinity River, Big Bear Creek, Precinct Line Road and the Dallas County line, roughly the area today within the Hurst-Euleless-Bedford school district, spread over almost 100 square miles. The population of the entire voting precinct was about 2,200.

[Tarrant County Commissioners Court Minutes, vol. A, pp. 33-36 ; U.S. Bureau of the Census, TENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1880, Tarrant County, Texas, pp. ??]

At the center of Bedford were a general store, a dry goods store that also served as the post office, a cotton gin, a grist mill, the church/school building, a doctor's office and possibly a blacksmith shop, a drug store and another store or two. The Dun business directory for 1882 listed Bedford's population as 40. In 1880, however, it had reported the population to be 350. A few business and farm families were concentrated around the business center. Bedford was not a platted town with streets and blocks. Only a few unpaved dirt roads ran through the community. There was no town government, hence, no town limits. It was very difficult to figure exactly how many people should be counted in the population.

[THE MERCANTILE AGENCY REFERENCE BOOK FOR THE WITHIN STATES [TEXAS], CORRECTED UP TO JANUARY, 1880 (New York: R. G. Dun & Co., 1880), p. 10; ditto, July 1880, . 11; ditto, January 1882, p. 14 ; TENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES, 1880, Tarrant County, Texas, pp. ??; Green, HURST, EULESS AND BEDFORD, pp. 14, 15, 18]

Bobo had secured a post office in 1877 and served as first postmaster. In 1882 postmaster was Harris E. Valentine, who with his brother, Richard T. Valentine, operated the dry goods store. Dr A. F. Scott, a physician, operated the general store. There were a few other stores, gins, schools and churches scattered through the Bedford voting precinct. The only voting place and post office, however, were at Bedford. Almost all people made their living by farming. Bedford was located in the Eastern or Lower Cross Timbers, a narrow strip of sandy loam running through eastern Tarrant County. Most of it was originally covered with large oak trees. Many still stood, but more had been cut to clear land for farming or for building materials, firewood and other uses. The soil was especially well adapted for growing fruits and vegetables, as well as cotton and corn. The region also became noted for its dairy farms. Most people prospered and enjoyed good lives. In addition to their civic and business interests, Bedford citizens were also interested in the arts, especially music and literature, supporting such activities as a string band, a literary society and a singing school.

[Record of Appointments of Postmasters, Tarrant County, Texas, 1878-1890, 1891-1902; 1880 census Tarrant County, pp. ??; Richard V. Francaviglia, THE CAST IRON FOREST: A NATURAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CROSS TIMBERS (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998), pp. 7, 19, 144, 164, 191 ; Fort Worth Daily Democrat, April 4, 1879; Dun, 1882, p. 14; FWST; FWRT;. GSUN, September 8, 1927; The Fort Worth Daily Gazette, February 20, 1893; March 1, 1893; March 15, 1893; May 22, 1893; April 5, 1893; April 19, 1893; April 25, 1893; May 3, 1893; June 9, 1893;.]

In this setting many residents saw a need to enhance education in Bedford, even though they already had a community school. Instigator of the college movement was J. H. Smithers, a school teacher who had recently come from Add-Ran College located at Thorp Spring, Texas, near Granbury, and affiliated with Texas Christian Churches and Churches of Christ. He was the first headmaster of the college. According to its charter, filed July 3, 1882, with the Texas Secretary of State, Bedford College was a private corporation, created for the "maintenance and operation of a Male and Female College for the support and promotion of Scientific and Literary Education." Organizers of the college were Milton Moore, B. J. Valentine, J. H. Smithers, John Mahan, W. D. Trimble, R. T. Valentine and W. W. Bobo, the first five serving as directors of the corporation.

[Charter of Bedford College, Office of Secretary of State, Austin, Texas; Holden, "Education in Tarrant County," pp. 41, 42; FWST, September 3, 1928; "Bedford College, 1890," photograph, Fort Worth Star-Telegram Photograph Collection, Special Collections Division, the University of Texas at Arlington Libraries.]

On July 21, 1882, Milton Moore deeded a four-acre tract to the directors for use of the College. A building was erected on a hill about one-half mile west of the church grounds. Before it was finished, however, the college began operation in the church building that had also been used as a school since 1874. Upon completion of the new two story, wooden frame building, the college moved to its new facilities.

[Holden, "Education in Tarrant County," pp. 40-41; Patricia Helvey, "Bedford School," MS, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 21, 1915; Tarrant County Deeds, vol. ??, pp. ??.]

Businessmen, farmers and the entire community sacrificed money, time and labor to erect the school building that measured 30 by 60 feet. A Mr. Bondurant was contractor. The institution was not what today would be referred to as a college, but was more of a college and university preparatory school. At the same time it served as a public school for school age children living in Bedford. In addition to local pupils, it accepted boarding students from elsewhere who paid tuition. By hiring outstanding administrators and teachers, the college even attracted students from out of state. [Holden, "Education in Tarrant County," pp. 41-42.]

Smithers established stringent standard for the college. It offered advanced work in geometry, Latin, algebra, rhetoric and composition. Music and oratory were soon added, along with other courses. Following Smithers as headmasters was Peter Himebough (or Hindbough) from Bedford County, Tennessee (according to one account he was professor Hinebough from Missouri). About 60 years of age, he was a former Confederate soldier who had lost an arm at the Battle of Gettysburg. Shortly after assuming his position as headmaster, he was stricken with a painful carbuncle on his neck. He soon died and was buried in an unmarked grave in the Bedford Cemetery. He was succeeded by James A. Clark from Winchester Normal College, Winchester, Tennessee. Clark introduced a number of modern educational innovations and involved the community more in college affairs. He structured the school day for short recitation periods, broken with several short recesses throughout the day. Patrons became enthusiastic about their school, visited it often and appreciated a variety of entertainments that it provided. The college was recognized as one of the most progressive and best managed in North Texas under professor Clark's leadership. His successor, W. H. Kimbrough, perpetuated his policies. A genuine professional educator, he was a good disciplinarian and was described as a person of "unusual intellectual keenness." The last headmaster of the college was D. J. Liles (or Lyle) from Fort Worth, employed in July 1893. He was described as an "able instructor" and the community expected "grand success" for the college. Instead, his tenure ended in disaster for the school. There were other principals of the school before it became known as Bedford College in 1882, and there were many other teachers who served both the public school and the college. Among them were William H. Wright, who was also minister for the New Hope Church, his wife, Alice Barkeley Wright, William Boone, W. E. McGinnis C. W. Rains, ? ? ? ? ? . [Holden, "Education in Tarrant County," pp. 42-44; Helvey, "Bedford School;" Star-Telegram, July 21, 1915; GSUN, September 11, 1924; Green, pp. 18-19; "Bedford College, 1890," photograph.]

The college building burned on June 2, 1894, a Saturday night, about eleven o'clock. The uninsured building was valued at \$3,000. Arson was suspected from the beginning. Accusing fingers pointed to recently dismissed principal Liles. Suspicions notwithstanding, he was not convicted of any crime. The

building's destruction meant an end to the college. The land reverted to Milton Moore who then deeded it to the Bedford School District for use as a public school. Another wooden frame building was erected at the site. It was replaced by a fine two story, brick building in 1915 that is still standing. Now known as the Old Bedford School, it is owned by the City of Bedford and operated by the Bedford Historical Foundation. It has become a unifying element for the city, a rallying point for historical preservationists in North Texas, a living museum and a place for fine entertainments. In 1991 a devastating fire gutted the building, but it was restored exactly as it was in 1915 and opened to the public. Hundreds of local school children visit each year, plus many other visitors. It is in almost constant use for a wide variety of educational and entertainment events. [FWDG, June 5, 1894; Holden, "Education in Tarrant County," p. 44; FWST, July 21, 1915; AJ, July ??, 1915; Green, ??; interview Libby Buuck, ??; "Bedford College, 1890," photograph.]

Although short in duration, Bedford College was a prestigious institution, and many of its graduates became outstanding leaders in education, medicine, business, politics, farming and other endeavors. Hence, there existed a group of well-educated, influential people, graduates of the College, who were eminently successful in their respective occupations and who appreciated the fine education they had received there. Among graduates of Bedford College were M. H. Moore, Superintendent of North Fort Worth and Fort Worth public schools; Lee M. Hammond, Tarrant County School Superintendent; William M. Trimble co-founder, with Lee M. Hammond, of Arlington College, now the University of Texas at Arlington; John M. Moore, Tarrant County Treasurer; Jesse M. Brown, Hugh L. Small and I. T. Valentine, each Tarrant County Judge; Hugh Hightower, Tarrant County Commissioner; Ben M. Terrell, District Judge; Dr. W. M. (or H.?) Trimble, Tarrant County Physician and Fort Worth City Physician; Dr. Monroe? Gilbert, physician in Irving; Dr. J. E. Bobo, physician in Topeka, Kansas, and many other accomplished professional and business people. [FWRT; FWST, August 26, 1912, July 21, 1915, September 8, 1919, September 5, 1921; Gerald D. Saxon, *Transitions: A Centennial History of The University of Texas at Arlington, 1895-1995* (Arlington: The UTA Press, 1995), p. 1.]

In 1912, former students of the college met for a reunion on the grounds of the New Hope Church where the college began in 1882. Leaders of the reunion movement were Bedford natives and former college students, M. H. Moore and Lee M. Hammond. M. H. "Harvey" or "Harve" Moore, a son of Milton Moore, was superintendent of the North Fort Worth public schools. Hammond was Tarrant County School Superintendent, who in 1895, with W. M. Trimble, had founded Arlington College, now the University of Texas at Arlington.

The first reunion met on August 25, 1912, to commemorate the opening of the college about the same time of the year in 1882. The day's activities began on the Sunday morning with traditional worship services at the New Hope Church. Moore, whose parents and many other relatives lived in Bedford, preached and conducted services as he had done one Sunday each month for about ten years. In addition to

being an educator he was also a minister for Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and Churches of Christ.

[And move on into narrative written by Weldon G. Cannon in 2003 to secure a Texas Historical Commission marker for the Bedford Reunion.]