

Weldon G. Cannon History Files

In this folder donated to the City of Euless, labeled **BIRD'S FORT**, are a few key documents and other materials from files donated to The University of Texas at Arlington for the Weldon Cannon Euless Collection in the Special Collections of the University Library. Following is a brief summary of materials in 1 folder under this subject that was donated to UTA.

Folder Contents

1. Bird's Fort—A collection of documents, public records, newspaper and journal articles, etc., about the subject. [wgc note—I grew up in the 1930s and 1940s playing on the fort site around the 1936 granite historical marker, the club house and the swimming pool when my family visited the Armentrout family. I heard many stories about fishing at nearby Calloway Lake and a variety of adventures and escapades around the lake from parents, grandparents, cousins and others.]

27" x 42" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Tarrant County (Order #5802)
Location: FM 157, 1 mi. E of Trinity River near Arlington

SITE OF***
BIRD'S FORT*
(ONE MILE EAST)***

IN AN EFFORT TO ATTRACT SETTLERS TO THE REGION
AND TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM INDIAN RAIDS, GEN.
EDWARD H. TARRANT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TEXAS MILITIA
AUTHORIZED JONATHAN BIRD TO ESTABLISH A SETTLEMENT
AND MILITARY POST IN THE AREA. BIRD'S FORT, BUILT NEAR
A CRESCENT-SHAPED LAKE ONE MILE EAST IN 1841, WAS
THE FIRST ATTEMPT AT ANGLO-AMERICAN COLONIZATION
IN PRESENT TARRANT COUNTY. THE SETTLERS, FROM THE RED
RIVER AREA, SUFFERED FROM HUNGER AND INDIAN PROBLEMS
AND SOON RETURNED HOME OR JOINED OTHER SETTLEMENTS.

IN AUGUST 1843, TROOPS OF THE JACOB SNIVELY EXPEDITION
DISBANDED AT THE ABANDONED FORT, WHICH CONSISTED OF A
FEW LOG STRUCTURES, ORGANIZED TO CAPTURE MEXICAN
GOLD WAGONS ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL IN RETALIATION
FOR RAIDS ON SAN ANTONIO, THE OUTFIT HAD BEEN DISARMED
BY UNITED STATES FORCES.

ABOUT THE SAME TIME, NEGOTIATIONS BEGAN AT THE FORT
BETWEEN REPUBLIC OF TEXAS OFFICIALS GEN. TARRANT
AND GEN. GEORGE W. TERRELL AND THE LEADERS OF NINE
INDIAN TRIBES. THE MEETINGS ENDED ON SEPTEMBER 29,
1843, WITH THE SIGNING OF THE BIRD'S FORT TREATY. TERMS
OF THE AGREEMENT CALLED FOR AN END TO EXISTING
CONFLICTS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LINE SEPARATING
INDIAN LANDS FROM TERRITORY OPEN FOR COLONIZATION.**

*3/4 inch lettering
**1/2 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering

(1980)***

APPROVED
Truett Latimer

by [signature] 4-18-80

Incise on back: ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, SPONSOR

BIRD'S FORT

by Duane Gage
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In 1936 the State of Texas, through its Commission of Control for Centennial Celebrations, allocated two official historical markers for placing at sites in Tarrant County that are significant in the history of the Republic of Texas. One of the sites that received a Centennial marker was the site of Bird's Fort, where in 1843 a treaty council led to the opening of much of North Texas to white settlement.¹ During its nine years of existence, the Republic of Texas had a major Indian problem. The majority of Texans favored the use of military force for the purpose of extermination while an influential minority desired peaceful relations established through diplomacy and kindness. President Sam Houston's attitude was that of friendliness and good will; during his first term (1836-1838) he was able to avoid serious Indian wars.²

Texas' second president, Mirabeau B. Lamar, brought a drastic change in Indian policy by denying that Indians had possessory rights to the land and by inaugurating an aggressive frontier policy. Consequently Lamar's tenure (1838-1841) was marked by the bloodiest Indian wars Texas had known. Lamar called for the total expulsion of all tribes who had migrated from the United States, the creation of a stronger military force, and the establishment of a line of military posts along the frontier. Responding to Lamar's proposals, the Texas Congress passed laws providing for the establishment of a military road from the Red River southward and for the creation of ten companies of Rangers.³

During the summer of 1839 Lamar's harsh Indian policy began to produce violent results. On July 16, 1839, the Cherokees were defeated in an engagement fought a few miles west of present Tyler. Most of the warriors were slain along with the aged Chief Bowles, a beloved friend of Sam Houston.⁴ Other tribes, some of whom had tried to be friends with the Texans, began to fear that they too would be driven from their homes. The Indians' fears and suspicions were intensified in March, 1840, when a Comanche chief and a number of warriors were slain at San Antonio, while in a council with representatives of the Republic.⁵ The Council House fight and many similar clashes during Lamar's administration brought even further Indian resistance and depredations. The advent of white settlements developing along the upper Trinity River seemed quite remote. In 1840 the farthest western settlement in North Texas was Coffee's Trading Post on Preston's Bend of the Red River, north of present day Denison; east of there, white settlements in Fannin and Red River counties were growing significantly but were still subject to Indian attacks.⁶

In response to reports that Indian atrocities in Fannin and Red River counties were perpetrated by Indian war parties from villages on the Trinity River, in the spring of 1841 General Edward H. Tarrant of the Texas Militia led an expedition that destroyed encampments on present Village Creek in Tarrant County.⁷ On August 7, 1841, Tarrant commissioned Jonathan Bird, a native of Alabama, to organize a force of 150 volunteer rangers for a three-month expedition to build a fort at or near the site of the recent Battle of Village Creek.⁸ Bird was to establish a settlement there, under a Texas law that provided that lands be donated to men who would establish frontier military posts. It was hoped that settlers would feel safe to move onto lands around such garrisons while the area was being won from the Indians.⁹

Jonathan Bird, who at the time of his appointment by General Tarrant was given the rank of Brevet Major, was in the service from August 7, 1841, until March, 1842.¹⁰ Apparently Bird had difficulty in recruiting a full company of 150 volunteers and left Bowie in Red River County in the fall of 1841 with about forty men.¹¹ No reliable contemporary documents with details concerning the establishment and occupation of Bird's Fort has been found, but there are several secondary sources of interest and reminiscences of two or three of the participants which provide researchers with useful information concerning this effort to establish the first white settlement in present Tarrant County.¹²

In the autumn of 1841, Major Bird's troops arrived at a crescent-shaped lake slightly north of the West Fork of the Trinity River and west of the military road that reached from Preston's Bend to Austin. The site was approximately fourteen miles below the junction of the Clear Fork and West Fork of the Trinity. Inside the curve of the lake a fort was erected, consisting of a tall blockhouse and several cabins, three of which were enclosed in a stockade. The outer walls of the blockhouse were made of logs set on end, and a deep trench was dug around it. The fort nestled advantageously behind a semi-circular shield of oak woods, about forty feet from a spring which bubbled up at the end of the lake.¹³

Apparently the three-months volunteers experienced no serious Indian trouble while they were stationed on the West Fork of the Trinity. The company maintained Bird's Fort for about three months, hauling all their supplies from Donham at Bird's personal expense.¹⁴ Many of the soldiers who served with Bird planned to build permanent homes nearby, and at one time there may have been as many as twenty families at the fort. One of the prospective settlers wrote enthusiastically that "it is the best range country that I ever saw to raise stock.... As for land and range it can't be surpassed in any country.... Timber is short and plenty of buffalo, deer, bear, and it has the appearance of the healthiest country that I ever saw in my life."¹⁵

One of the first families to move to Bird's Fort was that of John Beeman, a farmer from Illinois who volunteered for Bird's company and was with the military contingent which built the fort. Beeman broke his arm in an accident on the way to the Trinity, but remained with the company until the buildings were completed. Then he returned to Bowie County for his wife and ten children. In late autumn John Beeman, his brother James Beeman, Wade Hampton Rattan, Captain Mabel Gilbert, and Solomon Silkwood and their families, with a few single men, were living at the fort, using the structures as headquarters and as protection from hostile Indian bands still occupying the Trinity valley.¹⁶

The most serious problem experienced by the Bird's Fort garrison was a shortage of food. According to a 1902 interview of John Beeman's son, William H. Beeman--who was thirteen at the time of their occupation of Bird's Fort--the weeks spent at the outpost brought an unforgettable ordeal:

As an inducement to settlers, the Republic of Texas promised to feed them all the first year, or until a crop could be made and gathered. In this, however, the Government failed utterly, and the pioneers had to rely on their own resources. On the way out the immigrants stopped at Fort English (the present site of Bonham) where they met Major Bird who advised them to take out some corn and beef steers, "as the boys at the Fort are pretty short of rations," he said. Major Bird negotiated with Mr. Bailey English (who was general trader) for five beef steers and a lot of corn, giving his note \$100 for the same. John Beeman and Hampton Rattan indorsed the note and Rattan getting killed by Indians, Beeman afterwards had it to pay in full.

When the party of immigrants arrived at Bird's Fort, they found the garrison entirely destitute of provisions, having had nothing to eat for a week. One of the Rangers, Riley Cole, had a few days before, picked up the feet of a calf that had been lying out on the prairie for six weeks (the calf having been butchered and eaten at that time) and he boiled these dry and discarded bones into a sort of soup, or jolly. This was greedily devoured by the starving garrison and was the last morsal they had until the Beemans and their companions arrived.¹⁷

In 1890 the Fort Worth Gazette published a similar account of the first attempt at making a permanent settlement on the upper reaches of the Trinity River. On arriving at Bird's Fort the pioneers were surprised to find that:

The Indians had burned off all the grass from all the surrounding country and no game was to be found. While a part of the men remained with the women and children...the others returned with the teams to the settlements in Lamar County, more than 100 miles distant to provide supplies. In spite of the efforts of the hunters but little game could be secured for subsistence, and the men, women and children suffered severely from hunger. It seemed that starvation was to be their fate. Hawks, rabbits, and small birds afforded some relief.....

On account of danger from the Indians, few men could be spared from the fort but in their extremity, Capt. Webb, a Mr. Silkwood, and Wade H. Rattan made an extended hunt some 15 miles or more towards the Elm Fork of the Trinity. On Denton Creek, or some tributary to it, these men found the signs made by a bear in ascending a large tree. Supposing the bear to be in the hollow of the tree, hibernating for the winter, they went to work to cut it down. While Rattan was cutting the tree the Indians from ambush fired on the men. Rattan was killed; the others made their escape and returned to the fort. Nine days afterward the body of Rattan was recovered by the returning friends who had gone to the settlement for provisions, and who had been acquainted with the disaster by friends who had met them from the fort. A faithful bulldog had remained with his dead master and preserved him from mutilation by buzzards and wolves. Rattan's remains were interred at the fort.¹⁸

Author James F. De Shields apparently interviewed Alex W. Webb, survivor of the Indian ambush, who was living in Mesquite, Texas in 1905, and learned that Rattan's death had occurred on Christmas day, 1841. About one and one-half miles southeast of present Carrolton, on the east side of the Elm Fork, Rattan, Solomon Silkwood and Webb had been attacked by Indians while trying to cut down a bee tree. Webb and Silkwood, after killing one of the Indians, escaped to the fort. Rattan's body was recovered on December 30, 1841. He was buried in "a rude coffin, made of an old wagon bed.... At the time of the tragedy, snow was six inches deep and the weather intensely cold, and from the exposure on the trip, Silkwood sickened and died."¹⁹

The burial ground for Hamp Rattan and Solomon Silkwood is probably the oldest Anglo cemetery in Tarrant County.²⁰ In 1926 a letter written from San Angelo, Texas by J. J. Goodfellow, former Tarrant County Surveyor, contained information as to the exact location of the old fortress and its burial ground:

My first visit to the graves was in 1866, at which time Col. B. Rush Wallace was the owner of the property covering most of Calloway's Lake and the Ground upon which the old blockhouse and the graves are located. The remains of the house were then plainly visible. They stood on the northeast bank of the lake at a point where a country club later built a swimming pool on the ground and destroyed most of the signs of these trenches. From this blockhouse a path led in a northeasterly direction, probably 250 or 300 yards through timber to the graves.²¹

Tarrant County Judge C. C. Cummings accompanied Goodfellow on at least two surveying trips to Bird's Fort and also verified the site.²²

This first white cemetery in present Tarrant County, which has been lost for years and which may now be obliterated by gravel excavations, may have received additional graves in early spring, 1842, after a few new arrivals reportedly joined the Bird's Fort settlers who had survived the adverse winter. According to Fort Worth historian Mary Daggett Lake's writings in 1927, among the new arrivals were Jonathan Bird's father, William; William's daughter; and a man named Cartwright, who lived with the Bird family. All three of these individuals were reportedly killed by Indians one day as they were returning with water from the lake.²³

In the early spring of 1842 some small attempts at farming were begun, but on account of the malarial conditions near the lake, the pioneers decided to quit the locality and hunt for a more suitable area. At about that time the Bird's Fort settlers were visited by John Neely Bryan, a 31-year-old Tennessee native who in 1841 had come through Arkansas by way of the Red River. About twenty miles below the fort, near where White Rock Creek flows into the Trinity,

Bryan had built a lone cabin at a river crossing. Seeking the friendship and security of neighbors, Bryan invited the families at Bird's Fort to move onto the fertile lands near his new home. Captain Habel Gilbert, John Beeman, and the widow of Solomon Silkwood decided to accept Bryan's invitation. Moving their families to lands along White Rock Creek in present Dallas County, they broke land early enough in 1842 for spring planting of the first peach seeds and corn in the Dallas area.²⁴

The remaining survivors of the Bird's Fort settlement abandoned their dreams for establishing homes there and returned to the Red River settlements, or relocated on the East Fork of the Trinity River at a new settlement in what is now Collin County.²⁵

Within a few months Bird's Fort again was to be used in an historic manner. In April, 1843, the Jacob Snively Expedition, a 170-man force sanctioned by the Republic of Texas, set out from Fannin County on the Red River in search of Mexican gold trains which they planned to capture as they passed along the Santa Fe Trail through Texas-claimed territory. The force was organized to retaliate against Mexico for the capture of San Antonio twice in the summer of 1842 by roving Mexican forces. Plagued by dissension and jealousy, the expedition split after a disappointing encounter with a force of 100 Mexicans on ground claimed both by Texas and Mexico. A short time later Snively and 76 men ran head on into a 200-man United States Army force led by Colonel Philip St. George Cooke. The United States forces demanded that the Texans give up their arms, and Snively's men felt they had no choice but to comply. Following this humiliating experience, Snively and his men returned to North Texas and disbanded at Bird's Fort on August 6, 1843.²⁶

Simultaneous to Snively's expedition along the border, President Sam Houston's peace policy during his second term (1841-1844) brought Texas officials and

Indian representatives to Bird's Fort to negotiate the Indians' final removal from the Eastern Cross Timbers. In December, 1841, as soon as he was inaugurated for his second term, President Houston sent representatives to Indian council grounds and slowly re-established peace with most of the Texas tribes. Houston called for the establishment of permanent Indian reservations and the erection of trading posts beyond the frontier line where Indians could trade their goods for needed supplies. All the chiefs were invited to a council to be held on the Brazos River at the Waco village on October 26, 1842, where the Indians could exchange their white captives for Indian women and children whom the Texans had held as prisoners since the Council House fight.²⁷

Unfortunately heavy rains and flooded rivers kept the Indians away from the Waco council, but in the summer of 1843 another call went out for a grand council to meet at Bird's Fort at the full moon of August, with chiefs from all tribes in Texas. In August, while the Superintendent of Indian affairs, Joseph C. Eldredge led a party of Indian agents, interpreters, and traders far out on the northwestern plains in an effort to induce the fearsome Comanches to attend the Bird's Fort negotiations, President Houston went to Bird's Fort to begin the council discussions himself.²⁸ Allegedly there was a man from England, E _____ Parkinson, who was a member of the party representing Texas and who kept a diary:

In the diary PARKINSON TELLS of stopping in Dallas and visiting with JOHN NEELY BRYAN, of their camping at White Rock Springs (now White Rock Lake), Cedar Springs and then to Bird's Fort. Later the party went to Grapevine Springs to wait on the Indians which by this time were well overhuc. The commissioner of Indians, as it turned out later, had been captured by the Comanche Indians and nearly scalped before they turned him free. General Houston, not aware of his capture, blamed the delay on Col. JOSEPH C. ELDRIDGE, the commissioner, and so relieved him of his position and returned to the capitol, Washington on the Brazos, leaving Gen. TARRANT and Gen. GEORGE W. TERRELL as his representatives to negotiate the treaty with the Indians.²⁹

Journalist Tex Adams referred to the Parkinson diary in describing President Sam Houston's sojourn while waiting to sign a treaty with the Indians:

Houston left Crockett on July 4 with a large party who hoped to make the trip a buffalo hunt, as well. He arrived at Bird's Fort (some dozen miles southwest of Grapevine Springs on the Trinity West Fork) but found neither Indian chiefs or his commissioners.

After spending several days at the swampy fort, Houston withdrew in a rage to the higher ground at Grapevine Springs. There he fretted for almost a month before returning to Washington on the Brazos. Chronicled E. Parkinson, "They were some fine though rather monotonous days, only relieved by finding a bee tree or killing our beeves."³⁰

Many of the tribes had gathered by mid-August. Eldredge's party was still out on the plains trying to coax the Comanches to come to the council. Not only did the Comanches refuse to come to Bird's Fort, they threatened to kill the Texas officials to avenge the massacre of their kinsmen at the Council House in San Antonio.³¹ By late August Houston decided to council with the tribes that were on hand,³² and to leave General Tarrant and George Terrell to conclude the negotiations as soon as the Comanches arrived. Dressed in a purple velvet suit, with a huge bowie knife thrust in his belt, and a folded Indian blanket draped over one shoulder to proclaim his brotherhood with the red men, Houston eloquently promised the chiefs that a favorable treaty line would be drawn beyond which the Indians could live unmolested by white men. Then he returned to the capital to attend to the affairs of the Republic.³³

Not until mid-September did Eldredge's party ride into Bird's Fort with the message that the Comanches were not coming.³⁴ Terrell and Tarrant then entered into negotiations with chiefs of nine tribes who were present. A treaty embodying the principles of Houston's peace policy was signed at Bird's Fort on September 29, 1843, and ratified by the Texas Senate on January 31, 1844. Placing their marks on the document were chiefs of the Delaware, Chickasaw,

Waco, Tawakoni, Kichai, Caddo, Anadarko, Ionie, Biloxi, and Cherokee tribes. Both parties agreed to live in peace, protect all women and children, and respect the treaty line along which trading houses were to be established. Neither whites nor Indians were to cross the line without authority to do so; those who violated the treaty were to be punished.³⁵

The Bird's Fort Treaty line was to run roughly from hunting lands north of present Fort Worth, to the present site of Menard on the San Saba River, and from the San Saba to San Antonio. Trading houses were to be established near the junction of the Clear Fork and the West Fork of the Trinity, at Comanche Peak near Granbury, and on the San Saba River.³⁶

Following the negotiations, in early October 1843 General Tarrant and Captain B. Booth travelled to Clarksville, Texas, and related important details concerning the recently concluded treaty council:

Of the tribes who have treated, the first three were exceptionally wild, and wore no clothing, except the breech clout. The remnants of Cherokees who were there, were in a most distressed condition. The family of Bowles who were all there, would not come into the camp until the Commissioners purchased clothes for the women and children.... The commissioners went out eight miles from the treaty ground, and met the Indians as they came in....³⁷

The treaty council at Bird's Fort was the last official event to occur at the outpost during the years of the Texas Republic. Most of the Indians in North Texas remained northwest of the treaty line, but others disregarded it completely, in the same manner that many whites refused to acknowledge that the Indian lands were officially closed to them. Clashes between Indian raiding parties and white traders and settlers were to continue sporadically in North Texas for another thirty years. Land speculators and settlers interpreted the terms of the Treaty of Bird's Fort to mean that the lands of the upper Trinity River were officially ready for white settlement. A number of men who participated in the establishment of the fort and in the official negotiations at the site acquired lands under the Peter's Colony contract and became known as important

North Texas pioneers.³⁸

The log blockhouse and the cabins at the outpost did not remain erect for very long. In 1853 an editorial correspondent for the Clarksville Standard visited the locality of Bird's Fort during a journey in which he visited many noted sites connected with the first settlements of the country "before every vestige of their primitive appearance was effaced by the hand of improvement." The correspondent reported:

We came upon the margin of a beautiful lake in the shape of a crescent, about three hundred yards wide in the centre, and coming to a point at either end. It is the handsomest sheet of water I have seen in Texas, large enough to admit of admirable sport in the way of sailing and fishing. As we got opposite the centre of the lake, we saw upon the other side, perched upon a limb, a bald eagle, which as we got near, extended its wings and went out of sight... The lake is, in summer, three to four feet deep, but now from the Spring rains, perhaps seven or eight feet deep in the centre. It has a gravelly bottom, clear water, and abounds in fish. Within the area enclosed by the semicircular water, a high point of land puts in probably fifteen feet higher than the surrounding prairie. This land was originally all timbered, but close upon the lake the timber had been cut down by Bird's men, probably as a measure of protection as well as utility, and the land had been put in cultivation. Upon this a young growth has sprung up. None of the structures of the fortification remains now, but a new settler has put up a house, from which was absent when we were there. No land however is in cultivation yet, and the place looks much as tho' no one had been there to change the aspect which time has given it, since the first Pioneers left it. Fire from the burning of the grass has effaced the houses and the picketing which enclosed them, but we could trace the places where they stood, and the line of enclosure, which was near the centre of the point, close upon the water. Bird is dead; died in Titus County, in peaceful country, and the place would now, years after its settlement, still repose in lonely beauty, but for the cabin lately put up.³⁹

Since the time of its official use during the era of the Texas Republic, the property on which Bird's Fort was built has continued to have an interesting history. The site of the fort and the lake around it became a part of the T. D. Newton 320-acre survey (Abstract # 1165) when the land was designated for official settlement. In 1866 Col. B. Rush Wallace owned the property. Wallace died intestate in July, 1878 and in 1879 Tarrant County Tax Collector

J. M. Henderson authorized the sale of the property for delinquent taxes to R. E. Maddox for \$26.00.⁴¹ In 1880 John R. Wallace, nephew of Col. Wallace and executor of his estate, purchased the land from Maddox for \$56.00, in order to settle affairs with other heirs of Col. Wallace's estate. Later that year John R. Wallace sold the property--except thirteen acres covered by a part of and near to the Calloway Lake (including the fort site)--to Thomas P. Youngblood.⁴² Apparently by that date an agreement had been made (but not filed) with Dallas sportsmen for developing the thirteen acres into a hunting and fishing club. By 1886 Sam P. Shaffen owned the T. D. Newton survey land adjacent to the lake, and sold it to D. C. Trigg, Jr.⁴³ The sportsmen's organization was called the Calloway Lake Hunting and Fishing Club; memberships were sold at \$200.00 per share. In 1895 it was operating as the Silver Lake Hunting and Fishing Club and memberships were \$250.00 each.⁴⁴

In 1908 confusion concerning the ownership of Calloway's Lake resulted in a law suit in which the heirs of Thomas P. Youngblood sued Benedict Nessler, representing Silver Lake Hunting and Fishing Club, for control of the property. The jury awarded the Youngblood heirs 1/3 interest in the land then decreed that the suit should be settled by having the sportsmen's club pay the plaintiffs a cash sum and in return the club would attain full ownership of the lake and the improvements there, which had been developed by the sportsmen's organization.⁴⁵

In the 1930s local historians became interested in the historic site and arranged to have an official Texas centennial marker placed at the edge of the sportsmen's club swimming pool, where it was believed the old blockhouse had stood, the swimming pool having been constructed supposedly where the fort's trenches had been located.⁴⁶ The marker's inscription stated:

Site of Bird's Fort
Established in 1840 by Jonathan Bird on the Military Road from Red River to Austin. In its vicinity an important Indian treaty, marking the line between the Indians and the white settlements, was signed September 29, 1843 by Edward H. Tarrant and George W. Torrell, representing the Republic of Texas. The ragged remnant of the ill-fated Snively Expedition sought refuge here, August 6, 1843.⁴⁷

When the marker was placed at the club's facilities the organization's charter was controlled by Percy Davis, Ellis Mitchell, Edward Armentrout, and Mrs. French Davis.⁴⁸ Subsequently the property came under the ownership of Charles D. Armentrout and for several years the facilities were leased to the Arlington Sportsman's Club.⁴⁹ In recent years the sports facilities have not been used. Gravel excavations on all sides of the site of the frontier outpost have seriously diminished its historical integrity and historical tours are conducted to it with difficulty. Consequently the Arlington Historical Society in 1979 sponsored a project to obtain an official Texas Historical Marker that would be placed on State Highway 157 immediately west of the site, so that future generations will be aware of the notable events that occurred when Texas pioneers first attempted to secure and settle this land.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Dallas Morning News, undated clippings in "Bird's Fort in Notes and Clippings," compiled by Duane Gage (1975), TCJC Local History Collection; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, March 5, 1934. The other centennial marker allocated for Tarrant County was in commemoration of General Edward H. Tarrant's military campaign against Indian encampments on Village Creek in May, 1841.

² Walter Prescott Webb, "The Last Treaty of the Republic of Texas," The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXV (January, 1922), pp. 151-152.

³ Rupert N. Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970), p. 111.

⁴ Mary Whatley Clarke, Chief Bowles and the Texas Cherokees (Norman, Oklahoma), pp. 109-111.

⁵ Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State, p. 112.

⁶ Rex Wallace Strickland, "History of Fannin County, Texas, II," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXIV (1930), pp. 41-42.

⁷ Ibid.; see also Duane Gage, "Village Creek," a documented narrative for an application for an official Texas Historical Marker, TCJC Local History Collection, 1979.

⁸ Handwritten affidavit, E. H. Tarrant, former Brigadier General, 4th Brigade, Texas Militia, Nov. 7, 1843 to the Hon. Matthias Ward, Washington, Texas, original copy in Texas State Archives. (see Exhibit A); handwritten affidavit, C. R. Johns, Inspector, 4th Brigade Texas Militia, October 7, 1843, to the Hon. Matthias Ward, Washington, Texas (see Exhibit B). Bird was born ca. 1783; died in Titus County, Texas, ca. 1850. Handbook of Texas, Vol. I, p. 163.

⁹ Ibid.; Richardson, Texas: The Lone Star State, p. 111. An act of the Texas Congress in December 1838 had provided for a system of frontier posts extending from the Red River to the Nueces River. Bird's Fort had not been established before the appropriations were exhausted. On Nov. 19, 1842, and again in November, 1843, Bird petitioned Congress for financial reimbursement, submitting an itemized statement of expenses totaling \$653.50 (see Exhibit C). Houston vetoed a bill for Bird's relief on the grounds that others had built frontier forts at their own expense. On January 8, 1845, Congress passed an act for Bird's relief, awarding him \$600 in drafts against taxes to be collected in Bowie County. The drafts were to be collected over a period of three years, but evidently Bird sold them at a discount for cash. The Handbook of Texas, Vol. I, p. 163; Amelia W. Williams and E. C. Barker (eds.), Writings of Sam Houston, III, pp. 473, 536.

¹⁰ Jonathan Bird, signed addendum to affidavit, E. H. Tarrant, Nov. 7, 1843 (see Exhibit A).

¹¹ Handbook of Texas, I, p. 163.

¹²One of the most interesting and useful contemporary sources of the establishment of Bird's Fort is found in a letter, "John S. Beeman to Samuel Beeman, October 30, 1841," original copy in possession of Dr. W. E. Beeman. (See Exhibit D)

¹³The Standard, Clarksville, Texas, June 4, 1853. This is an on-site inspection of the fort's ruins twelve years after the fort was established. The lake was later named Calloway Lake after a pioneer family who settled in that area.

¹⁴Handbook of Texas, p. 163.

¹⁵Affidavit, E. H. Tarrant, Nov. 7, 1843; Letter, John S. Beeman to Samuel Beeman, October 30, 1841.

¹⁶"Mr. and Mrs. William H. Beeman: Incidents of the Early Days in Texas," Dallas Morning News, January 26, 1902.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Fort Worth Gazette, January 5, 1890, p. 6. Excerpt from this article, "Old Times in Texas, Reminiscences of the Past by Actors of Long Ago, and Incidents in Early Days of the Empire State of the American Union," by J. W. T., is found in Thelma Ray, History of Birdville (1965), pp. 3-4.

¹⁹James T. DeShields, Border Wars of Texas (Tioga, Texas, 1912), pp. 353-354.

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Michael E. Patterson, "Abandoned Pioneer Cemeteries of Northeast Tarrant County, Texas: A Preliminary Survey," unpublished manuscript, TCJC Local History Collection (1976), p. 16.

²¹Letter, J. J. Goodfellow, San Angelo, Texas, 1926, printed in Fort Worth Star-Telegram, March 5, 1934.

²²Letter, C. C. Cummings, Tarrant County Judge, to Grapevine Sun, March 15, 1913, found in an undated clipping in "Bird's Fort in Notes and Clippings," compiled by Gage, TCJC Local History Collection.

²³"Excerpts from Writings of Mary Daggett Lake, October 2, 1927," in Thelma Ray, History of Birdville, p. 5. There may have been several other persons buried in the Bird's Fort burial ground. Arista Joyner, Arlington, Texas: Birthplace of the Metronplex 1838-1910 (Texian Press, Waco, Texas 1976), p. 22, alleges that among the members of the party at Bird's Fort were two young single men, "Henry Long, and his brother (unnamed in references) who died. Henry, saddened by his brother's death, decided to return to the settlements and accompanied the men who left with the supply wagon." A Capt. Robert Sloan reportedly "led a prospecting party as far out as the Fort: but soon returned as one of the party, David Clubb of Illinois and veteran of the Blackhawk War of 1862, was killed by the Indians at a small lake on the Elm Fork of the Trinity a short distance above its mouth and below Keenan Crossing," related in "Information on Bird's Fort," compiled by J. L. Paddock (1963), p. 11. One of the Texas participants at the treaty negotiations at Bird's Fort in 1843, "Mr. Thomas Torrey of Houston, who had been with Mr. Eldridge, died at the treaty ground of congestive fever, on the 27th September," The Northern Standard of Clarksville, Texas, reported Oct. Oct. 14, 1843.

24 "Mr. and Mrs. William H. Beeman," Dallas Morning News, January 26, 1902; "Town and Times," by Tex Adams, Daily News-Texan, July 7, 1962. John Neely Bryan married Margaret Beeman, daughter of John Beeman. The refugees from Bird's Fort significantly contributed to the early growth of the settlement that came to be called Dallas, Texas. Dallas Morning News, January 26, 1902.

25 Fort Worth Gazette, January 5, 1890.

26 Handbook of Texas, Vol. II, p. 632.

27 Webb, "The Last Treaty of the Republic of Texas," pp. 153-154.

28 Ibid.

29 Paddock, "Information of Bird's Fort." Paddock cites as his source on the Parkinson Diary: The Lusty Texans of Dallas, by J. E. Rogers.

30 Tex Adams, "Town and Time," Mid-Cities News Texan, July 11, 1962. This researcher has now been able to locate the Parkinson diary, and confirms the data. A typed copy of the diary is now in the TCJC Local History Center.

31 Diary of J. C. Eldredge, Genl. Superintendent of Indian Affairs, in Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843, Texas State Library, Austin (1959) pp. 270 following.

32 Talk of Ke-chi-ka-roqua the Tawakoni Chief, Texas Indian Papers, 1844-1845, p. 40. Houston's cordial visit with the Indians who were present paved the way for the success of the Bird's Fort Treaty. Said Ke-chi-ka-roqua, "The Delaware Captains say they met him at Bird's Fort, and made peace." Ibid.

33 Webb, "The Last Treaty of the Republic of Texas," p. 154; Mid-Cities News-Texan, August 11, 1962; Julia Katheryn Garrett, Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph (Austin, 1972), pp. 43-44.

34 Diary of J. C. Eldredge, Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843, p. 274. There has been some confusion concerning whether the negotiations and signing of the Treaty of Bird's Fort actually took place at the outpost. Eldredge's diary seems to verify that they did: "On the 20th started for Bird's Fort having been detained two days to recruit the horses which were unable to proceed farther without rest.... On the 24th arrived at the Council ground, on the Trinity River." Ibid., p. 274. Several expense statements and certificates of employment dated from Bird's Fort near the treaty date also confirm the location of the treaty council: "Bird's Fort Sept 30th 1843. We hereby certify that we imploied Jim a Delaware Indian to assist Luis Sanchez to go and see the Indians at thier villages and to bring them to the Treaty and that he was ingaged Seventeen Days and that he cam to our Camp in the Company with J. C. Eldredge who had bin employed by the President to bring the Indians in. (Signed) E. H. Tarrant
G. W. Terrell"

This affidavit, "Certificate of Employment of Jim, A Delaware, by E. H. Tarrant and G. W. Terrell," is in Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1843, p. 144-145.

35 "Treaty of Bird's Fort, September 29, 1843," Documents of Texas History, pp. 142-143, from E. W. Hinkler (ed.), Secret Journals of the Senate, Republic of Texas, 1836-1845 (Austin, 1911), pp. 288-293.

36 Ibid.

37 The Northern Standard, Clarksville, Texas, Sat. Oct. 14, 1843.

38 Julia Kathryn Garrett, Fort Worth: A Frontier Triumph (Austin, 1972) pp. 46-47.

39 Clarksville Standard, June 4, 1853.

40 Letter, J. J. Goodfellow, San Angelo, Texas, 1926, in Fort Worth Star-Telegram, March 5, 1934.

41 Tarrant County Deed Records, Volume C, p. 60.

42 Tarrant County Deed Records, Volume M, p. 343; Vol. 56, p. 97; Vol. 57, p. 479.

43 Tarrant County Deed Records, Volume 71, p. 161.

44 Copy, Calloway Lake Hunting and Fishing Club Share Certificate, May 25, 1891, purchased by John M. Jones; copy, Silver Lake Hunting and Fishing Club Share Certificate, Nov. 14, 1895, purchased by W. T. Hutchinson, copies compiled in Paddock, "Information of Bird's Fort."

45 Tarrant County Deed Records, Volume 301, pp. 586-587; Vol. 303, p. 436.

46 Letter, J. J. Goodfellow, San Angelo, Texas, 1926, in Fort Worth Star-Telegram, March 5, 1934.

47 "Site of Bird's Fort Texas Historical Marker," containing a copy of the marker inscription. The erroneous date, 1840, apparently came from the use of inaccurate secondary sources by those researchers who prepared the 1936 marker inscription. Materials in Exhibit A confirm that the fort was established in 1841.

48 Dallas Morning News, undated clipping in "Bird's Fort in Notes and Clippings," TCJC Local History Collection.

49 Letter, Charles Desmond Armentrout, Dallas, Texas, August 1, 1977, to Duano Gage, Tarrant County Historical Commission.

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WELDON GREEN CANNON

Reminiscences About

BIRD'S FORT

A 1936 Texas historical marker at the site of Bird's Fort profoundly affected my life. I remember playing around the marker in the late 1930s when my parents or grandparents visited there. Born at Euless, Texas, in 1934, I lived about 2 miles from the site of the fort. The Bird's Fort story has been told many times, so I will not repeat that, but only tell what I recall about the site from as far back as I can remember. I was always impressed by the large granite marker. Probably among the first things I learned to read was the brief text, deeply incised in bold capital letters on the stone. This also might have been my first history lesson, setting me on a course to my life's work. Also on the grounds a few feet away were an empty swimming pool, supposedly the exact site of the fort, and a bit farther away the club house, left over from the days when a sportsman's club owned the land before an Armentrout family acquired it. Besides being a destination for hunters and fishermen, from as early as 1900, and probably considerably before, the place was used for picnics, reunions, parties and all manner of celebratory events. There was also a water well on the grounds with a windmill and overhead water storage tank.

The site was located in the bend of Calloway Lake, a crescent shaped natural body of water near the bottom lands of Trinity River. Electric power lines had not reached the area. Lack of electricity then was not unusual since even the business center of Euless, at the intersection of present Euless Blvd. and Euless Main St., did not receive electricity until 1928. Lines were not extended ½ mile south from there to the Euless School and my parents and grandparents nearby houses until 1932. The lake club house was lit at night with kerosene lamps, creating, in my mind, a spooky, eerie atmosphere. I did not like being there at night. The only access to the property by automobile or truck was along a one lane, rutted path through a pasture, about ½ mile from the nearest public road. Somehow my parents, Ross and Winnie Day Cannon, and grandparents, Arch and Della Whitener Cannon, had become friends with the Armentrouts, who occasionally invited us to visit with them when they were there on retreat from their Dallas home. My grandparents and father loved to fish, and with the lake full of beautiful catfish, bass and crappie, it was one of their favorite fishing holes, to which they seemed always to have access.

In addition to the bit I remember, I have heard numerous stories from grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and older cousins, about their experiences associated with the lake. Arch went on overnight and distant fishing expeditions with his buddies, but Della would go with him to nearby Calloway Lake. One of my favorite photos is of them holding up a couple of long strings of large fish they had caught. There was a flat-bottom metal boat that stayed on the lake. Fishers pushed off from the shore into the generally shallow lake to find good fishing spots. On one trip, someone stood up in the boat, which tipped over, dumping everyone into the lake. Della almost drowned.

Aunt Lois Cannon (later Mrs. Fred Trimble) liked to talk about being baptized in the lake. The Eules Methodist Church, over 2 miles away, usually baptized from a bowl of water in the church. But my aunts Lois and Jessie Cannon (later Mrs. Warren Fuller) and their mother, Della, wanted to be immersed. The church gathered at the lake and the minister performed the baptism. Lois, even many years later, commented that he was probably the maddest Methodist preacher she had ever seen, because he had to get so wet, needlessly, he thought.

I was the youngest of 14 grandchildren of Arch and Della, so I missed out on many of my older cousins' capers. Nevertheless, I recall some cousins, such as Troy Fuller, Jerald Cannon and Loran Borah, telling this story or some variation. When they were teenagers they would sneak onto the Calloway Lake property to seine for fish. Once, someone, obviously claiming to be responsible for security of the property, went after them, even shooting at them. They fled, escaping injury, but dared not tell their parents or grandparents.

I have related the above stories from memory. I think I have written records, that I sometimes refer to as interviews, that I made when I first heard the stories. They might supply more detail. There are also numerous articles in the Arlington newspaper through the first 40 years of the 20th century that describe many of the gatherings and events on the grounds and at the club house. I photocopied many of the articles and made notes of all. Later, I will add them to this file.

BIRD'S FORT TODAY

by

David Haynie
1977

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be removed from the
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BIRD'S FORT TODAY

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BIRD'S FORT TODAY
(1977)

BY

DAVID HAYNIE

OCT 15 1980

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BIRD'S FORT TODAY (1977)

In the beginning - in 1840 - Fort Bird was established for two reasons. One, to form a nucleus for a colony, and two, to provide protection against the Wichita and other roving tribes of hostile Indians. Established by Captain Jonathon Bird and about thirty Texas Rangers, the Fort was only used sporadically after 1842 when the Ranger enlistment ran out. By the 1850's Fort Bird was abandoned and the original settlement had disappeared.¹ Today, Fort Bird as part of the beginning of a growing Dallas - Fort Worth metropolitan area, is known mostly to Historians and local residents who have been in the area for some time.

At the present time, Fort Bird is located on 118 acres of land occupied by Mr. and Mrs. D. R. Page, who are caretakers for the property owned by Charles Armentrout of Dallas. Immediately prior to the property being leased by Mr. Armentrout, to the Arlington Sportsman's Club,

Fort Bird was readily accessible to the public. Today the privilege of visiting the Fort is by appointment only, at the convenience of the Page's.

Today the outlying land around the Charles Armentrout's 118 acres is mainly owned by gravel companies. The land has been dug up by heavy machinery and the hopes of finding any additional artifacts or unknown burial sites becomes more remote with each passing day. According to Mrs. Page, TXI, one of the gravel companies, is attempting to obtain gravel rights on some additional land in the area. The expansion of the gravel companies is making access to Fort Bird more difficult.

Today the only thing left to show for Fort Bird is a stone monument approximately 2½ feet by 4 feet tall. Immediately to the left is a pickup

camper sitting precariously close to the monument. A few feet behind is the old, cracking, weed and trash infested swimming pool left from the days of the Arlington Sportsman's Club. A little farther back and to the left is a large mobile home occupied by the Page family and beside the mobile home is a makeshift dog run with a dog house. All this can be seen with one sweeping glance standing next to the monument. On the other side of the mobile home is the slowly deteriorating Arlington Sportsman's Club house, now only used as a storage shed. A few yards to the left and a little to the front of the monument is a place where people did their trap shooting. In general it appears to me that the monument is lost and forgotten in its surroundings.

In talking with friends who live in the general area (the metroplex), I found a majority of them had not ever heard of Bird's Fort. Most of those that did know of it, had lived in the area for a number of years. None of those who were aware of Fort Bird had ever seen the monument. To those most closely associated with it, Mr. Armentrout and the Page's, it is more a nuisance than anything, according to Mrs. Page. The nuisance attitude is something which I would blame some of the public for, more than Mr. Armentrout or the Page's. A small minority of the public by vandalizing property and having beer parties forced them to fence the property and keep a chain blocking the road locked. This in turn means that whenever someone desires to see the monument they must make arrangements for someone to meet them at the gate. At the present time, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and the Tarrant County Historical Commission are working to have the monument moved to a new location. Maybe this will help to make more people aware of this segment of the metroplex's past.

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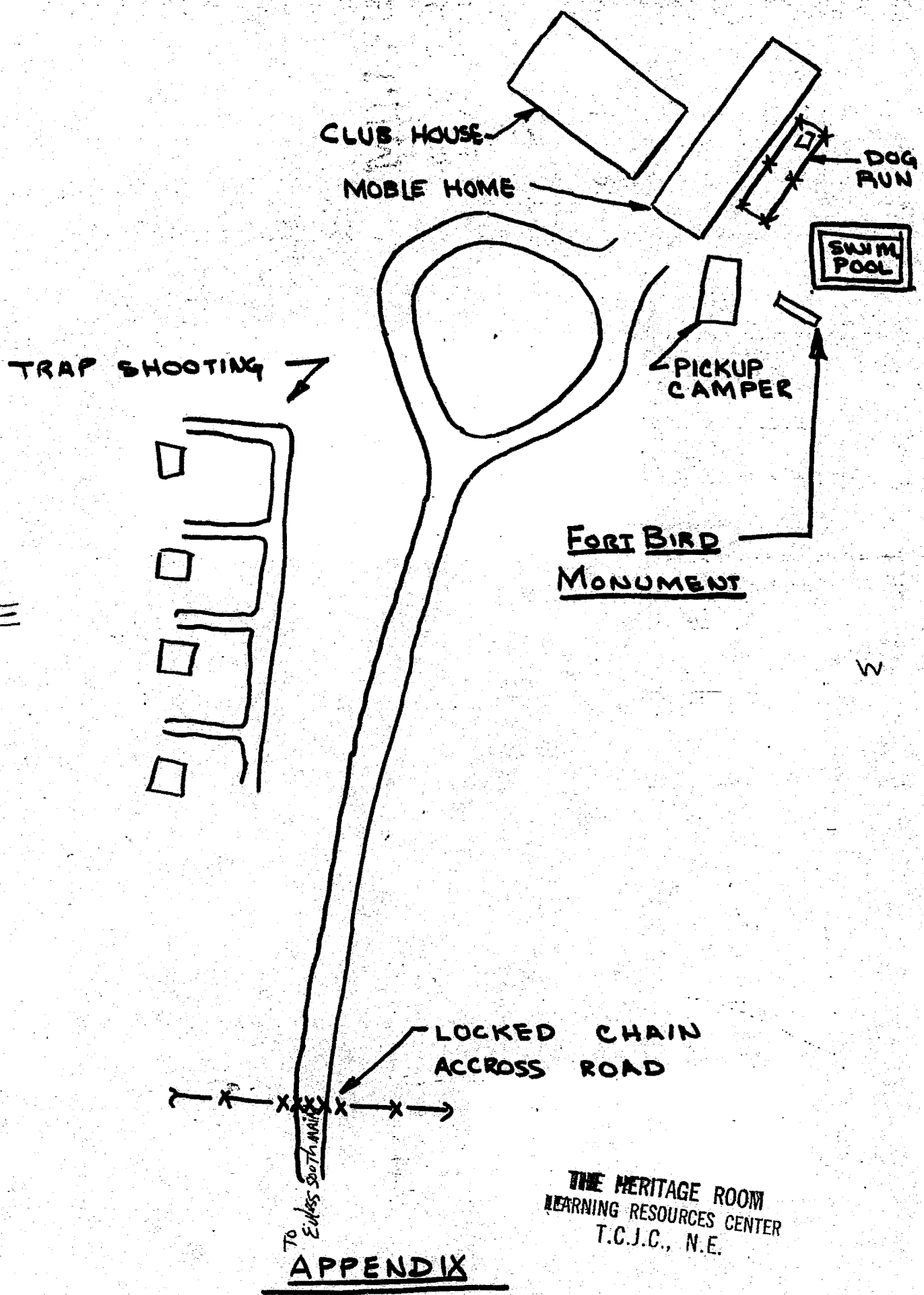
FOOTNOTE:

¹Jane McCray, Early Fort Bird was Seed of Today's Thriving Metroplex
The Sunday Observer, Sunday, July 4, 1976.

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FORT BIRD
MONUMENT

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APPENDIX

Arlington Metro

Sunday, February 16, 1997

Serving the cities of Arlington, Dalworthington Gardens, Grand Prairie, Kennedale, Mansfield and Pantego

STAR-TELEGRAM

time was described as the worst accident in the city's history.

More details are available in the Feb. 9, 1961, *Arlington Journal*, available on microfilm in the city library.

As to the Berachah Home, it operated within 10 buildings on 67 acres around Mitchell and Cooper streets from 1903 to 1935. That area is now part of the University of Texas at Arlington campus, though Doug Russell Park adjoining the campus was originally part of the grounds. A tiny stone prayer chapel and small cemetery in the park are all that remain. Most of the graves are those of newborn infants.

Berachah — the name stems from the biblical "valley of Berachah" — was founded by The Rev. J.T. Upchurch, certainly one of the most fascinating figures in the city's history. One of the best articles every published on the subject was written by *Star-Telegram* reporter Lisa Black and published Sept. 19, 1993 — so again interested parties will need to go to microfilm.

What most Berachah researchers don't know is that the home's records were turned over to special collections on the sixth floor at the University of Texas at

Upscale development on Arlington's horizon

BY JEANNE GRAHAM
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

ARLINGTON — Luxury home construction could begin by year's end in the huge Metrovest residential and commercial development in north Arlington if the City Council approves annexation of the property Tuesday.

"Annexation does everything,"

Construction could start soon after annexation

property owner Jim Salim said. "It allows us, from a financial standpoint, to consummate some relationships."

The council is expected to annex about 1,800 of the 2,000 acres the project, known as The Lakes of Arlington, is expected to encompass

just north of the city limits. The land is in the city's extraterritorial jurisdiction.

In an annexation, the city balances the revenues — such as property taxes and utility franchise fees — it expects to receive from a development against the expense of

providing city services such as police and fire protection.

Salim's company, Metrovest Partners Ltd., has proposed building 665 homes along three man-made lakes and a canal system east of Farm Road 157 and north of the Trinity River.

The home prices will begin at about \$500,000, Salim said. As pro- (More on METROVEST on Page 4)

100 teens display their skills at ACT-SO in Fort Worth

The event showcases the achievements of African-American youths.

BY JANETTE RODRIGUES
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

FORT WORTH — By the time the final ACT-SO judge made it to Timothy Burton's science project on spontaneous combustion of various chemicals, the O.D. Wyatt High School student was a study in

or dance, the Tarrant County high school students competing in the Fort Worth Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics were ready to have their petri dishes and paint brush strokes scrutinized.

Sponsored by the Fort Worth-Tarrant County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ACT-SO showcases the academic and cultural achievements of Afri-

ARLINGTON AREA

Police arrest two men late Friday after shots are fired after a verbal altercation outside a south Arlington pool hall.

Page 4B

Almost 300 seventh- and eighth-grade girls spend the day at the Expanding Your Horizons Conference on math and science careers at UT-Arlington.

Page 5B

FEATURES

Mayoral open early start f

BY MARY DOCLAR
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

ARLINGTON — Behind the scenes, the wooing has already begun.

Potential candidates, or at least their backers, are going a-courting trying to shore up support from various organizations and individuals although the May 3 City Council election is more than two months

Metrovest

From Page 1

posed, the project — which would take 24 years to complete — would include a nursing home, private botanical gardens and almost 3 million square feet of retail and office space.

The city and Salim have negotiated a development agreement to determine the costs of capital expenditures, the time frame for delivery of city services and how the costs will be apportioned. That agreement will be presented Tuesday to the council.

An economic impact analysis by Ralph Andersen & Associates showed that the Metrovest project would contribute \$5.5 million annually to city coffers.

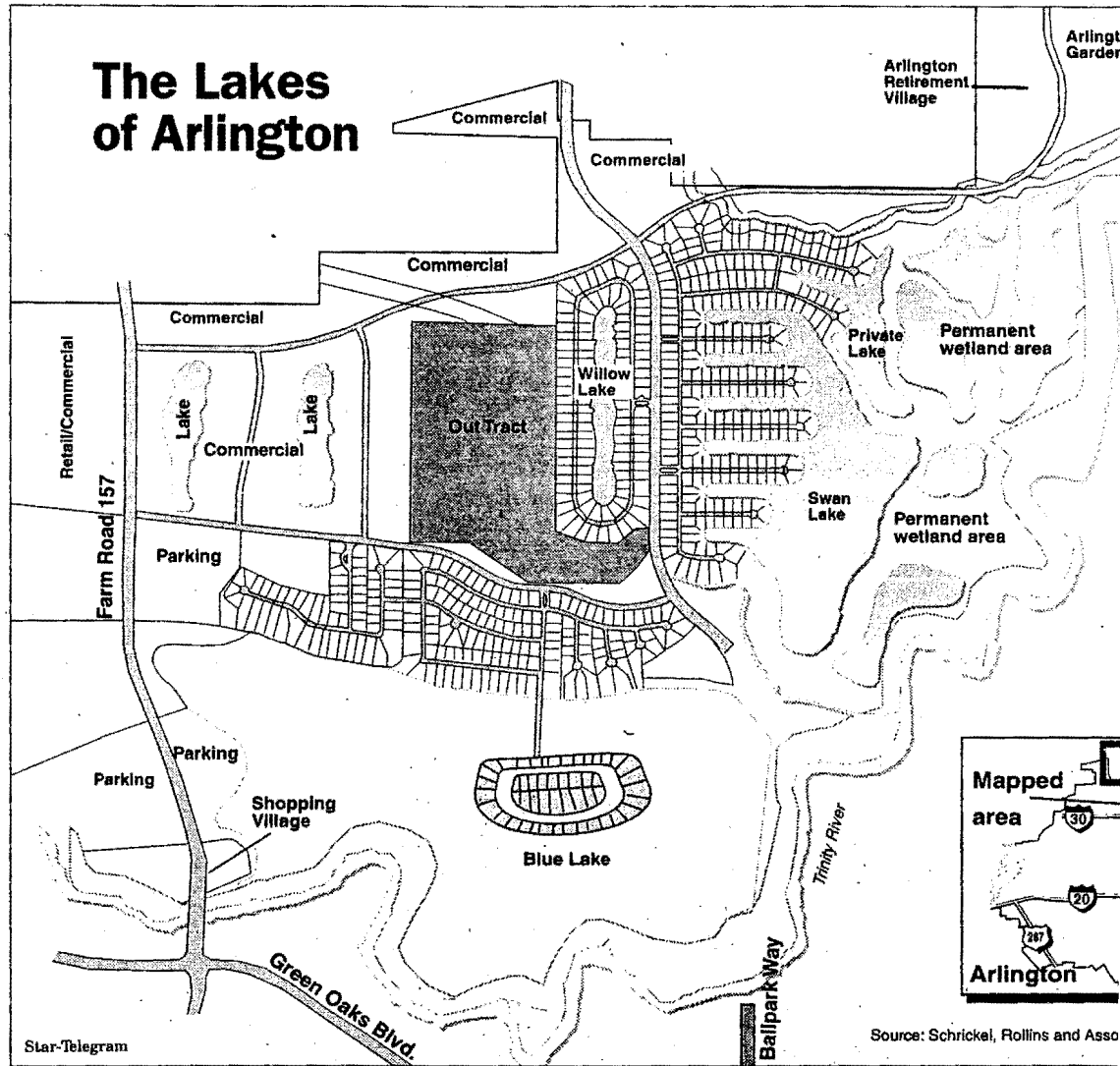
However, that estimate did not take into account capital costs such as a \$30.3 million bridge for an extension of Ballpark Way over one of the man-made lakes and \$2 million that would be needed for a fire station and police vehicles.

Annexation of the proposed development is advantageous to the city because it will give Arlington executive housing, which many city and business leaders have said the city needs, as well as generate property tax revenues, Mayor Richard Greene said.

"There's going to be an economic gain to the community immediately, and that will grow through the years of the development," Greene said.

Metrovest, meanwhile, has invested about \$20 million in the project. About \$3 million of that was to buy the property from the Resolution Trust Corporation in 1991 and 1992. An additional \$17 million was spent excavating dirt for the lakes and moving that dirt to other parts of the property to raise them above the flood plain,

The Lakes of Arlington



Salim said.

Salim said that he bought the company from his partners in November and has since been looking for investors, but that he was stymied in his efforts by the fact that the property is outside the city limits.

"No one would move till annexation and zoning were finalized," Salim said.

Receiving final approval on the annexation request would increase the availability of funds for the project, he said. Street construction could begin within 90 days, weather permitting, he said.

"My goal right now, by the end of this year, is that the residential phase will be full-blown and the in-

frastructure will be in," Salim said. "People could actually start buying lots this spring."

Metrovest obtained a permit a year ago from the Army Corps of Engineers for excavation and reclamation work. Because the company's development plans have changed from an entertainment complex to the mixed-use residential and commercial project, updated permits must be received from the corps before any building permits will be granted, city officials said.

The corps is reviewing Metrovest's modifications and will make a decision about whether the changes are in accordance with the permit later this month, corps

spokeswoman Nita Mall. Other flood-mitigation projects in the area including and widening of Farm Road 157, which Salim said is the commercial development land.

Metrovest, the city of Arlington and the Regional Transportation Council have committed about \$13 million to the project. An additional \$19 million needed to purchase the right of way, provide utility easements and widen and raise the road.

About \$5.7 million is for the project from state funds. The project is tentatively scheduled for completion by the Texas Transportation Commission during its March 27 session.

trovest

From Page 1

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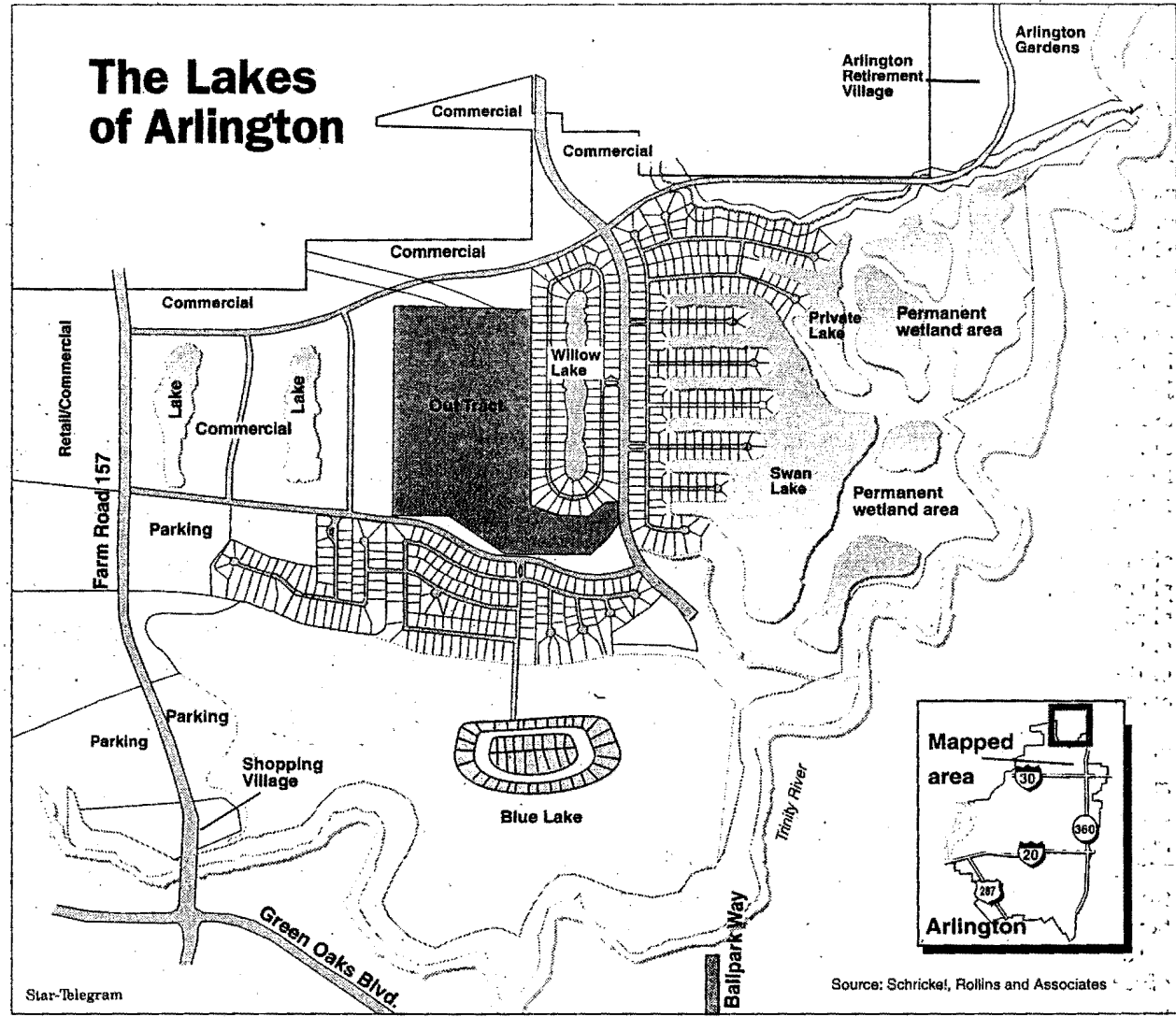
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The Lakes of Arlington



Star-Telegram

Source: Schrickel, Rollins and Associates

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The corps is reviewing Metrovest's modifications and will make a decision about whether the changes are in accordance with the permit later this month, corps

spokeswoman Nita Mallett said.

Other flood-mitigating improvements in the area include the raising and widening of Farm Road 157, which Salim said is crucial to the commercial development of the land.

Metrovest, the city of Arlington and the Regional Transportation Council have committed to contributing about \$13 million of the nearly \$19 million needed to acquire the right of way, provide the fill dirt and widen and raise the road.

About \$5.7 million is needed for the project from state funds, which is tentatively scheduled for discussion by the Texas Transportation Commission during its meeting March 27.