

# On The Vine

## GRAPEVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

V28#7 • DEDICATED TO PRESERVING GRAPEVINE AND TEXAS HISTORY • JULY 2025

### MODERN NEWS, ANCIENT HISTORY: PART ONE

## *When Dinosaurs Roamed Grapevine*

Perhaps you've noticed an increase of "terrible lizards" making tracks to Grapevine this summer. Not the little green ones in the garden, but their prehistoric relatives which lived in this area tens of million years ago. Before there were humans writing down history, dinosaurs left their mark... quite literally as footprints in muddy soils and bones that turned to stony fossils. Finding and interpreting those prehistoric traces millions of years later is the challenge, but in recent decades much new evidence has been unearthed across our area.

### AIRPORT AND OCEAN

If you'll pardon the expression, fossils are certainly nothing new around North Texas. Tarrant County's Fossil Creek was given that name by 19th century pioneers, and an 1887 scientific paper designated part of our Cross Timbers region as "Dinosaur sands." But large-scale evidence was rarely seen.

That changed in 1971 when DFW Airport began to be built. Construction crews were chewing off great chunks of earth, and on a rainy day that fall, Lance Corley spotted some ancient vertebrae in a drainage ditch under development. Soon a substantially complete skeleton

of a Plesiosaur was unearthed, a prehistoric marine animal nearly 30 feet long which lived about 70 million years ago. The skeleton was only the third of its particular species to be discovered. With help from Braniff Airlines, money was raised for SMU to restore and conserve the bones. With much fanfare they were put on public display on June 27, 1975, located between Gates 10 and 11 at Braniff's terminal (now terminal B) at DFW Airport.

A few years later, Braniff Airlines itself went extinct. The creature's bones were moved to a display at the airport's Central Utilities plant. In 2013, the plesiosaur was dismantled and moved to SMU's



*Braniff flight attendant Pam Kretlow with the Plesiosaur in June 1975*

Shuler Museum of Paleontology, where it is currently stored in the basement.

The airport's land has since yielded more fragmentary remains,

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### MUSINGS FROM THE MAYOR

## *Memories of the good Gulf station on Main Street*

Like so many buildings on Main Street through the years, a tenant that owned a business also had a landlord. This was the case of the old Gulf filling station on Main Street, across from Foust Funeral Home -- the building that is shortly to become a coffee shop.

The station was owned by Oscar Thomas and operated beginning in 1929 by Freddie Forrest Statum who was given the nickname of "Abie" after a cartoon character of the time. Statum was born and raised in Alabama before the farming family moved to Texas in 1897.

The Statums lived in a big two-story house next door which was separated into three apartments. Mrs. Bartley lived on the south side, Mr. Thomas upstairs, and the Statums on the north half of the ground floor. Abie was married to Martha Statum and they had two daughters, Eudene and Linda Sue. Mrs. Statum ran a hamburger joint in a portable building between the house and the station for several years.

The service station was a happy place. Workers and customers had a checkers game going inside almost all the time, played on a card table. Suggestive posters of movie stars lined the walls. Even though Grapevine was a dry area at that

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## Digging Ditches, Discovering Dinos

including a bone from of an armored dinosaur, and from the Ice Age (merely thousands of years old instead of millions) prehistoric bison and horse bones. Notably, in late June 1982, while mowing a creek bed north of the airport, Texas Highway Department employee Jimmy Conover spotted a tooth and part of a jaw from a 15 thousand year old Imperial mammoth. These were duly turned over to the Dallas Museum of Natural History.



*Paleontologists study the partially-excavated dinosaur footprints uncovered by a flood at the Grapevine Dam spillway in Spring 1982*

### (HADROSAUR) TRACKS IN THE SANDS OF TIME

Rising and falling waters are inextricably linked to local dinosaur finds. The airport's Plesiosaur swam in a prehistoric sea that eventually dried up. Modern-day Grapevine Lake's periodic droughts and floods have exposed terrain which have led to other discoveries.

On Halloween Day in 1981, heavy rains caused the lake's spillway to overflow and cut a 15-foot-deep channel that washed out Fairway Drive. Five months later, on March 14, 1982, the erod-

ed area allowed Judy Tyler, a 22-year-old geology student, and her husband Charlie to discover the footprints of a three-ton Hadrosaur, a plant-eating, web-footed, duck-billed dinosaur. As she told *The Grapevine Sun* that year, "I was just looking for neat things for geology students to study. We let our dogs into the clear pond there to swim. When we stopped, we were standing right on the tracks." Mr. and Mrs. Tyler were the first people to see the footprints in 85 million years.

Once the couple convinced local paleontologists of their find, and the tracks' legitimacy was confirmed, a plan was quickly put into place to conserve them. Barely a week later, scientists were studying the tracks and deciding how to cut them away from the earth. On April 15, a helicopter lifted the rocks containing the footprints into a nearby truck, which then drove them to a new home at the Dallas Museum of Natural History.

A casting of one of those hadrosaur footprints is permanently displayed at the Grapevine Historical Museum.

--Larry Groebe

*Next issue: Even newer discoveries... of even older creatures.*

*In 1958, Statum's Depression-era stone service station at 530 S. Main got a "modern" makeover in white.*



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time, you could get a free beer anytime. Beers were stored in the boiler room, which also controlled the hydraulic equipment for replenishing air in the tires of the vehicles. Inside the station, deer antlers were displayed above the doors and windows, souvenirs of hunting trips to Gillispie County, Texas. They were all three or four points, the kind of trophies that only Abie would settle for. It was a man's club, even though women traded there.

Back then they had employees to fill up your tank, so the women did not have to come in. It was the first station to provide separate restrooms for men and women. The women's restroom could be entered from the outside and therefore ladies did not have to encounter the décor and activities going on inside the station.

Shelves around the walls were filled with different kinds of motor oil. To the north was a wash rack where cars were washed and cleaned, and a ramp where cars were raised to change the oil. A men's social club gathered there daily. There was a soft drink machine out front and a coal oil tank. The drinks were kept cold by ice and the water drained off by a garden hose. The caps from the drink bottles were collected and then spread on the ground out back to absorb some of the oil that leaked on the ground in disposing of the empty oil cans. Sometimes the caps were supplemented by slivers of oil asphalt roofing material.

When I got my first car in 1957 you could buy a gallon of gasoline there for 25 cents a gallon: 5 gallons for \$1.25. Abie Statum required good work from his employees and expected cleanliness from his patrons. He was a jokester and liked to play pranks on his friends. There will never be another like him.

-- Mayor William D. Tate

*A more complete story is found in the Grapevine Characters book.*

CONNECTIONS TO IMPORTANT TOWN FAMILIES

*Small Winfrey House has big story to tell*

The newest historic Grapevine house to be saved for future restoration is the circa-1908 Charles Edwin Winfrey and Georgia Hardin Tate Winfrey house, which was transported down Main Street last month and placed in the Ted R. Ware Plaza at 619 S. Church St. Charles and Georgia were not the original owners, but lived there for decades before the house was moved from 205 E. Franklin St. to 610 Shadybrook for a second life as a resource building for GRACE (Grapevine Relief and Community Exchange) where it was used for 20+ years.

On June 24, 2025, the Winfrey House began its third life, moving from Shadybrook to 619 S. Church St. in the Ted R. Ware Plaza where, after restoration, its front porch will become a stage for the plaza and its rooms will become a storage area for the Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau. The Winfrey House is situated just north of the Grapevine Cotton Ginners Museum and across from the International Sister City Friendship Hall (formerly the Ruby Moore



*The Winfrey House, newly-deposited in the Ted Ware Plaza*

House) where it fits perfectly.

Charles Edwin married Georgia after his first wife, Margaret Moore Hurst, died in 1963. Charles worked for 36 years for Tarrant County as

a Heavy Equipment Operator. It is recorded in the Grapevine Area History book that they lived in this house. Georgia was an active community member of the Grapevine Garden Club, Ikebana Club, the Grapevine Historical Society, Women’s Division of the Grapevine Chamber of Commerce and member of the First United Methodist Church. She lived in Grapevine all her life. Georgia Winfrey died on July 26, 1986; Charles Edwin Winfrey died on November 17, 1994, at the age of 85 years.

Franklin Street was important to the Winfrey family. Charlie Taylor Winfrey, grandfather of Charles Edwin Winfrey, came to Grapevine from Rhome, Georgia, in 1880. He married Mary Elizabeth Lucas, daughter of Wingate and Cornelia Lucas, and they had four children. Mary Elizabeth died at an early age, and

so did Charlie’s second wife. In 1912, Charlie moved his little family into town to the corner of Jenkins and Franklin Street where they lived until all the children married. Charlie owned three lots in this location. Charlie

was also in the hardware and implement business on Main Street at Franklin Street which over the years became the Winfrey-Willhoite Implement Company.

Charles Edwin Winfrey’s father was William Bradley Winfrey, the eldest son of Charlie Taylor Winfrey. William Bradley Winfrey was called Bradley. Bradley married Willie Mae Starr, the daughter of Grapevine’s first Mayor, Barton Starr, Sr., and the granddaughter of Rev. Daniel Starr who helped organize the Methodist Church in Grapevine. Charles Edwin Winfrey, the owner of this house, was the eldest son of Bradley and Willie Mae Winfrey.

The Charles Edwin and Georgia Winfrey house ties together many of Grapevine’s most prestigious families - including the Starr, Lucas, and Willhoite families. They represent several Main Street business owners who sold farm implements, ran feed stores and operated automotive garages, and numerous civic leaders including a Mayor, City Councilmen, school board members and civic organization founders and board members. They were some of the families who laid the bedrock of the Grapevine community we know and love today, and all are associated with the structure.

Two of the categories by which a house can become a Grapevine historic landmark are its “*identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city*” -- and “*the exemplification of the cultural, economic, social or historical heritage of the city.*” Clearly, this house fulfills both of these criteria by having so many notable citizens and families associated with it.

--Sallie Andrews



*Bradley and Willie Winfrey with their children about 1923  
BACK: Hershell, Charles, Marguerite  
FRONT: Bertie, Lela, (Maxine on her mother’s lap), Francis*

CO-FOUNDER AND GUIDING FORCE BEHIND ESPARZA'S RESTAURANT

*Steven Brown, 1960-2025*



Grapevine is mourning the loss of a local legend. Steven Brown passed away suddenly but peacefully at home on the morning of June 28, 2025. He was 65.

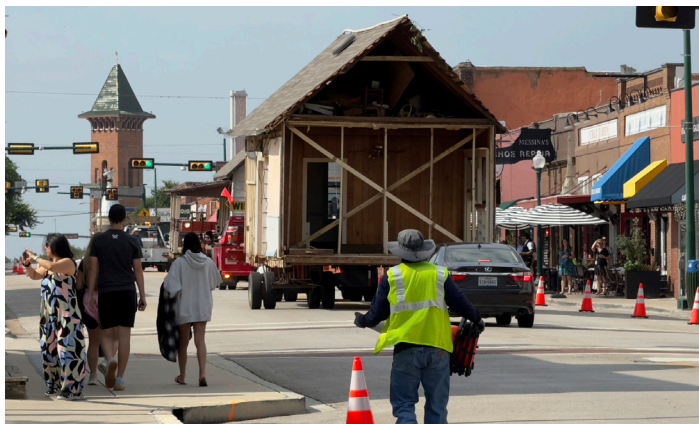
Steve was the force and the face behind *Esparza's Restaurante Mexicano* on Worth Street. He had just celebrated

its 40th anniversary. The restaurant was opened by Brown and Johnny Esparza -- the two had met while working at Ojeda's restaurant in Dallas. Within five years, Esparza's was so successful that the pair opened a second location in 1990. The original restaurant, still located in an 1880's era home, is equally famous for its margaritas and a welcoming patio, and many of its staff have worked there for decades.

Steve earned many community and business accolades over the years. He was active with the Grapevine Chamber of Commerce since his restaurant opened, served as Chairman in 2019 and was named the D.E. Box Citizen of the Year in 2021. He began serving on the Grapevine Chamber Foundation in 2021 and continued to serve until his death. Esparza's entered the Business Hall of Fame in 2011 and was named Member of the Year in 2018. Steve Brown was also a long-time business member of the Grapevine Historical Society.

*There will be a celebration of Steve Brown on Tuesday, July 22, 2025 10:00 – 11:30 am at the DFW Lakes Hilton, 1800 Hwy 26E in Grapevine. Attire: Business Casual or your nicest "Tommy Bahama" style shirt.*

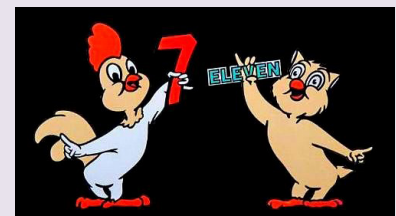
*On the morning of July 8, the circa-1888 James Arthur Tate House was carefully moved in two sections from Peach Street down to the Cotton Belt Railroad District, where it now awaits reassembly and restoration. The Tate house was discussed in the previous issue of "On The Vine."*



*July 28 GHS Meeting  
Oh Thank Heaven..  
For 7-Eleven!*

Oh thank heaven...for the neighborhood convenience store. The most convenient of them all is probably 7-Eleven, with 85,000 stores spread across the world. But its roots are here in North Texas, when 98 years ago the whole thing began as a single ice house in Oak Cliff. That grew into a chain of *Tote'm* stores during the Depression, which were then renamed *7-Eleven* stores following World War II. The world headquarters are still in Irving.

Our speaker will be **Margaret Fuller**, who spent 38 years working for the Southland / 7-Eleven Corporation. She will share the fascinating history of one of the biggest success stories to come out of this area, and her own personal history and experiences with the company.



**THE VINE ARTS CENTER,  
225 W. WORTH ST.  
6:30 PM REFRESHMENTS  
FREE • OPEN TO ALL**

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