

On The Vine

GRAPEVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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HISTORY HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT...

The Thomas Easter Cemetery

Every time you travel on 1709 Southlake Boulevard between Grapevine and Southlake, you drive right past a very small, very old historic cemetery which you've probably never even seen.

It hides in plain sight on the north side of the boulevard. Look for a little hillock right in front of the T.J. Maxx parking lot; a small rise anchored by an old elm tree between Craftway Kitchen and Anamia's Tex Mex. It's easy to miss this—the remains of the Thomas Easter Cemetery, which dates back more than 150 years.

of a tough pioneer life. Thomas Easter was born in Tennessee in 1823. By 1845 he had traveled to Missouri, where in 1845 he courted and married Charity Espen (or Espon), five years his senior. They started a family, then signed on as some of the early Peters Colonists, making the trek to Texas about 1848 with two young sons, Reuben and James, where hundreds of acres were waiting to be farmed. The 1850 census shows the Easters settled into present-day Southlake, near the farmsteads of the Freemans, Fosters, and Throops. Although records are sparse, it appears that here Charity gave birth to son James, then another boy they named Brown, a daughter Martha, and in 1856, a final son named Jasper.

The Easters were among the earliest members of the Lonesome Dove Baptist Church, and according to some histories may have donated the land where the permanent church was built.

Then the Civil War broke out, and Thomas Easter went off to serve the Rebel cause. He joined Hardeman's Regiment in the 31st Texas Cavalry, never rising above the rank of Private. With fighting still raging, he returned to his Tarrant County home in 1862, where he died. He was just 39. Cause of death is unknown.

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The Easter Cemetery on Southlake Boulevard

Park behind the little hill. Walk up the few steps. There's a granite bench memorial and one grave by a historical marker placed in 1983... frustratingly little for what was once a community thriving enough to merit mentions in 19th-century newspapers and maps.

What can be learned about Thomas L. Easter and his family traces only the barest outlines

MUSINGS FROM THE MAYOR

The Grapevine Ice Company

The Grapevine Ice Company was built by Earl Copeland in 1940 on Northwest Highway between Main Street and Scribner Street. It was a white frame building with a front dock, a window in the middle of the front facade and the name painted on the front in large green letters.



Wade Cummings, a local engineer, bought the business in 1946 and operated it for 21 years, when it was sold to Mayor Ira E. Woods in 1967. The mayor operated the business as an investment for several years. Ice production was originally 10 tons a day, which was expanded to 15 tons in 1947. Garden hoses were used to fill metal vats with water that, when frozen, made a hundred pounds of ice. The vats had hinges and clamps that were opened to remove the ice when frozen. There were creases in the vat that marked where the ice could be cut into 50- or 25-lb blocks. With a door and several windows in the front of the building, it was easy for people to witness the process of ice-making.

During summer months the Grapevine Ice Company provided ice to surrounding towns including Keller, Roanoke, Coppell and Hurst, Irving and even Dallas and Fort Worth. The Grapevine area had ice routes

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The short life (and long afterlife) of the Easter community

Charity and her children continued on. Eldest son Reuben mustered into the 34th Regiment of the Texas Cavalry. He died in 1864. Charity remarried in 1870 to a neighbor farmer named Asher Hardin. It was the second marriage for both. Their union lasted 6 years, until Asher divorced Charity, moved away, and married Sarah Raney. Thomas and Charity's youngest son Jasper passed away at age 24 in 1878 and was buried like his father on the Easter family land.

In 1880, Charity Easter was listed in the census as a "widow" under her Easter surname, still living on the acreage that her son William now managed with his wife and two children. That was the year that Brown Easter died, age 28.

Charity Easter herself passed away in 1882.

By this time, a "Thomas Easter School" had been constructed just east of the family graveyard, undoubtedly a simple one-room schoolhouse to teach the nearby farmers' children. The schoolhouse also served as a center for local gatherings. Among events held there were localized elections to elect officers who would enforce livestock laws.

One particularly vivid news account involving the schoolhouse appeared in the Fort Worth Daily Gazette on September 21, 1886. We quote it in full, as it reveals that political animosity could be strong even 140 years ago:

"From reliable reports, there was a high old time at Easter school-house, near Bedford, last Saturday night. There was to be political speaking, and several candidates made talks. Jim Foster, an ironclad Democrat announced in an eloquent oration his intention to run for constable on the Democratic ticket. As it was a Knight of Labor and Alliance meeting it would seem that Jim was not exactly in the house of his friends, but he spoke all the same. The proceedings were rudely interrupted by a row in which John Lambert got cut by one of the Glover boys. He was not dangerously wounded, but the fight broke up the meeting. The parties to the row were of the same political faith."

Two more Easter children, Martha and James, passed away in 1890, while William and his family moved to Jack County, where he died in 1893. Only Charity Easter had survived into her seventh decade.

The Easter school is clearly marked on an 1895 Tarrant County map, but some time after that it must

have ceased operations, because there are no more mentions. Grapevine's own school was just a few miles away and may have absorbed all the students as it grew.

The Easter Cemetery fell into disuse, and eventually the town of Southlake was created around it. The land repeatedly passed to new owners with dreams of future growth. Grapevine resident John Foust recalled that one time at least twenty gravestones were standing there, but in the mid-1970s only about six were still identifiable. These were hauled away by property owners in the spring of 1976.

In the decades since, shopping centers and traffic surrounded the cemetery, even while individuals and family descendants preserved the little that was left. If you ask the Craftway Kitchen staff today, they may tell you their building is haunted -- or cursed -- by the presence of the little cemetery. But this tiny plot is actually quite peaceful. Drive up, park, and spend a moment apart from the cars and shoppers, and let your imagination reflect upon the spot where some of our earliest pioneers lived and died.

-- Larry Groebe

A gravestone for Hardin West and a memorial for the Easters are about all that remain



OUR HISTORY BETWEEN THE TINES...

The Three Forks of the Trinity

The Trinity River is a 710-mile river that rises in extreme northern Texas, a few miles south of the Red River. It was an important waterway for native people. The Trinity River was previously identified by the Caddo as “Akokisa” in central Texas and “Daycoa” nearer the coast. Akokisa means “river people.” French explorer Robert Cavelier de La Salle, in 1687, named the river “Riviere des Canoes” (River of Canoes). In 1690, Spanish explorer Alonso de León named it “La Santísima Trinidad” (the Most Holy Trinity).

a primary, independent fork of the main river.

The East Fork of the Trinity River begins near McKinney, flowing through Lavon Lake and then Lake Ray Hubbard before joining the main River just southeast of Dallas.

The Elm Fork of the Trinity River flows south from near Gainesville through Ray Roberts Lake and east of the city of Denton, eventually through Lewisville Lake. The West Fork and the Elm Fork merge as they enter the city of Dallas.

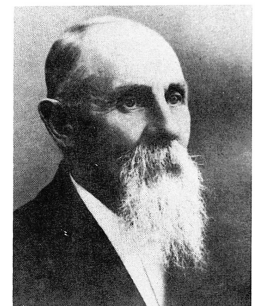
The West Fork of the Trinity River has its headwaters in Archer County. From there it flows southeast, through the man-made reservoirs of Lake Bridgeport and Eagle Mountain Lake, and eastward through Lake Worth and the city of Fort Worth.

The Clear Fork of the Trinity River begins north of Weatherford, Texas, and flows southeastward through Lake Weatherford and Benbrook Lake reservoirs. It flows northeastward, where it joins the West Fork near downtown Fort Worth and continues on as the West Fork.

and provides water for over 7.5 million people in the Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston regions.

In 1840, the Texas Congress authorized a military road be constructed from Austin through Waco and the Three Forks to Coffee’s Station. Holland Coffee had established his trading post on the Red River near present-day Denison. It became the main gateway into North Central Texas in the 1840s. The Texas Congress authorized a line of forts to be built west of the road to protect it from Indians. During the fall of 1840, advance parties of army surveyors entered the Three Forks area – and the rest is history.

In 1845, Rev. John Allen Freeman brought his family to a crossing into Texas near present day Bonham. They headed toward



Reverend John Freeman

the Three Forks of the Trinity, and on to the Elm Fork. There, near present day Grapevine, the Freeman family met the Gibson and a dozen or more families who were Peters Colonists, and Freeman preached his first sermon in Texas.

Today we hardly think about the Three Forks of the Trinity except when we hear about flooding or other issues. The land between the tines is developed now, but the waterway is what drew the first settlers to the prairie and created our home. Its history important to understand.

-- Sallie Andrews



The Trinity River was once expected to be navigated by steamboats

The Trinity River has three main branches or forks – the East Fork, the Elm Fork and the West Fork. These were historically considered the principal branches that created the main stem of the river in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. While there is a fourth, small branch known as the Clear Fork, it merges into the West Fork in Fort Worth before reaching the other larger confluences making it a tributary to a fork rather than

The Trinity flows southeast from Dallas across a fertile floodplain and the pine forests of eastern Texas. The river empties into Trinity Bay, an arm of Galveston Bay that is an inlet of the Gulf of Mexico, near the town of Anahuac located southeast of Houston. The Trinity River is the longest river in Texas located entirely within the state, flowing from North Texas to Trinity Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. It drains a 17,922-square-mile basin

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How we kept things cool, back when iceboxes didn't actually make ice

just like mail routes. The iceman delivered ice to homes on a daily basis before electric refrigerators became dominant. The residents had ice cards, with the numbers 100, 50, 25 and 12 1/2 printed on them. They placed these in their window and iceman knew how much ice to leave in the refrigerator on that day. People didn't lock their doors back then, and the iceman would enter the house for the deliveries even when the owner was not home. He had an ice hook that he used to pick up and carry the ice on his back. He wore a leather pad which shielded his back from the wet, cold ice. I can remember following the iceman into neighbors' houses to see how much ice they were buying and what they had in the refrigerator. This was part of my daily entertainment.

In the mid-1950s, ice crushers and coin-operated vending machines were installed in a room on the east side of the ice house. You could just walk in and get 25 lbs of crushed ice for a quarter placed in the machine. Ice was dispensed in a double lined, heavy paper sack. Twenty-five pounds was just

enough ice to make home-made ice cream on Sunday, or to ice down a watermelon in a tin wash tub. Local construction workers came early each morning to fill kegs with cold ice water. Local farmers used the crushed ice to keep produce fresh in transport. Local grocery stores also used large amounts of ice, including crushed ice, to keep soft drinks cold in what was called the cold drink box which was furnished by the bottling companies.

The opening of Lake Grapevine also created a new market with visitors toting ice chests. Some areas around town did not have electricity until the early 1970s, and ice was depended upon to keep insulin for diabetics, milk for the kids, and meat from spoiling quickly. The Grapevine Ice Company closed in the early 1970s and was torn down. The empty lot next to the Quick Way marks the spot where it used to be. Meanwhile, in 2011 the Grapevine Historical Museum recreated the old ice house facade to welcome visitors.

--William D. Tate



The Grapevine Ice House in its heyday of the 1940s...



...as it was being torn down in 1976...



....and reconstructed as a Museum in the present day.

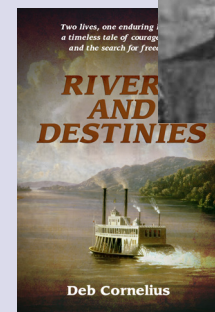
MONDAY MARCH 23 GHS GENERAL MEETING

*Captain Mabel Gilbert: Restless North Texas Pioneer
with Deb Cornelius*

He was a steamboat captain. He fought beside General Edward Tarrant at the Indian massacre of Village Creek in Tarrant County. He helped build Bird's Fort. He then took his family and paddled down the Trinity River to a newly established settlement by John Neely Bryan -- which the Gilbert family helped to name "Dallas."

Then Captain Mabel Gilbert, his wife Cherry and their children moved on yet again, but not without leaving their mark on the formative years of Tarrant and Dallas counties.

Author and storyteller Deb Cornelius will share her research into the history of Captain Gilbert and his family, much of which found its way into her recent historical novel "Rivers and Destinies."



THE VINE ARTS CENTER • 225 W. WORTH • 6:30 PM REFRESHMENTS • FREE EVENT

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