

On The Vine

GRAPEVINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ONE LAST NAME, SHARED BY TWO IMPORTANT FAMILIES

More Walls of Grapevine

Grapevine history is full of stories about the Wall family. Or, rather, the Wall *families* - because there are **two** distinct Wall families who are bedrocks of the Grapevine community.

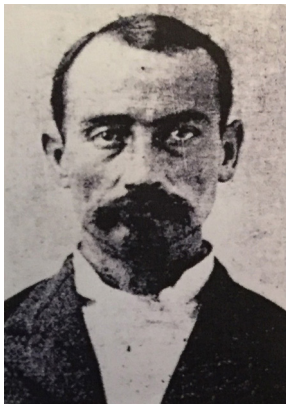
In our previous issue we reviewed Andrew Berry Wall and his descendants, including traveler Charlie Wall and Grapevine Mayor Drew Wall. This time we consider the *other* pioneering Wall family.

WALL FAMILY #2

Did you know that there was a Benjamin Wall in Grapevine before the beloved, long-serving mayor B. R. Wall? Grapevine's original Benjamin Wall and his brother, Zachariah Taylor (Z. T.) came to Texas from Montgomery, Alabama, stopping first in Lancaster, Texas in 1871, then continuing to Grapevine in 1872. That year Z. T. opened a pharmacy on Main Street in while brother Benjamin Franklin Wall started a grocery store. Benjamin Wall eventually moved on, later farming near Sherman Texas, and applying at age 65 for a pension as a former Confederate soldier.

In 1874, Z. T. Wall married Virginia Araminta Jenkins, daughter of Grapevine pioneer merchant Eli

Mathis Jenkins. Z. T. and Virginia had four children: Benjamin Richard (B. R.) Wall, Clifford Jenkins Wall, Zenona Wall, who married Myles Buchanan (Grapevine's ninth mayor in 1921); and a



19th-century image of Z. T. Wall

baby named Zachry Taylor Wall, Jr., who died in infancy. Z. T. and Virginia had 15 grandchildren – 13 of whom were girls! One grandson died in infancy; one grandson survived (James Estill Wall) and was a World War II hero.

Back In 1872, Z. T. and Virginia got off to a rough start; they also ended their life together in a very rough way. The honeymooners took a buggy to Flower Mound, and then a train to Waxahachie to visit Z. T.'s father, Richard Wall. Richard gave his new daughter-in-law a sewing box with a \$50

-- Continued on Page Two



Wall's Drug Store on Main Street in the early 20th century

MUSINGS FROM THE MAYOR

Grapevine's Most Famous Lawyers

Early settler Archibald Leonard served as our first postmaster, as Justice of the Peace, and as clerk of the first court in Tarrant County. He also represented the county in the 12th Texas Legislature.



James Morehead was Grapevine's first practicing attorney, dealing with a lot of land patents and title work. He was also elected the second judge of Tarrant County, and is credited with organizing Parker County.

Benjamin Richard Wall was a local boy who became an attorney and received Texas Bar Card No. 1 after graduating from Baylor School of law. He formed several successful businesses around the turn of the century including the *Grapevine Sun* newspaper, and he chartered the first Boy Scout Troop west of the Mississippi River: Troop 7 in Grapevine. B. R. Wall never held a driver's license or owned a car. His clients drove him to court. He hired some young boys to plant the pecan trees along Franklin Street so he could walk to work in the shade. B. R. Wall served as our Mayor for twenty-five years, and his statute is located on the North side of City Hall.

Wingate Lucas III was born in Grapevine to Wingate Lucas II and Eunice Dell Lucas on May 1, 1908.

-- Continued on Page Two

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

The Walls of Grapevine, Part Two

bill inside. The gift proved to be a godsend, because while they were gone from Grapevine, there was a fire in the pharmacy and their store was destroyed. That \$50 enabled them to reopen for business.

Z. T. was a well-respected pharmacist. In 1879 he was one of “The Immortal Eighteen” founders of the Texas State Pharmaceutical Association. The Walls were successful and built a substantial house on the southeast corner of Main and Franklin Street. However, working with chemical compounds all his life took a toll on Z. T.’s health. He died in 1911 at a hospital in Terrell, Texas, where he is buried. Virginia continued to live in their home on Main Street until her death in 1931. She is buried in the Grapevine Cemetery.



The Wall home stood north of the Foust funeral home; now city parking.



Clifford Jenkins Wall

Z. T.’s son Cliff Wall took over the drug store for a time, and later opened a “confectionery” business which operated for many years in the spot that later housed City Drug.

Cliff’s brother Benjamin became a passionate advocate for the community. At the age of 19 he founded the *Grapevine Sun* newspaper, turning it over to the Keeling family after a few years. He worked at the County Surveyor’s Office, was a founder of the Farmers’ & Merchants Milling Company, and helped

out at his father’s pharmacy.

Most notably, he served as Grapevine’s fourth mayor in 1912, and also its sixth, eighth, and twelfth, guiding Grapevine through the difficult years of the Depression and World War II. It is B. R. Wall whose statue you see on Main Street standing opposite the Torian Cabin.

Zachariah Taylor (Z. T.) Wall’s extended family includes the Jenkins, Bushong, Yates, Estill, Willingham, and Brock families among others. Tommy Simmons is a modern descendant.

Ronald Reagan noted that “the family is the bedrock of our nation.” The two distinct Wall families of Grapevine, who both arrived in 1872, represent just such bedrock which we continue to build upon today.



Mayor B. R. Wall examines Pitcairn Island artifacts in 1941

--Sallie Andrews

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

Local legal eagles

The Lucas family home at the corner of Worth and Smith Streets is a landmark today in the Grapevine Historic Residential District. Lucas received his law degree from American University in Washington D.C. while working for Hon. Fritz G. Lanham, the U.S. Congressman of the Twelfth District, which included Grapevine and Fort Worth. Wingate married Jerry Clark, a registered nurse, and the couple returned to Grapevine to make their home and raise five children. He served as Assistant District Attorney under Marvin Brown, and after WWII he served as Assistant United States Attorney, prosecuting drug cases.



Congressman Wingate Lucas

In 1945, Wingate Lucas was elected United States Congressman for the 12th District of Texas, an office he held until 1954. After leaving Congress he practiced law in Grapevine. The family was active in the Methodist Church for many years. I can remember when the family came home to Grapevine during the Congressional summer recess. He came to church with his family and always wore a nice seersucker suit and summer hat.

Thomas M. French Jr. graduated from Baylor Law School in 1948. He practiced in Alpine for two years, and was assistant city attorney and professor at Sul Ross College. In 1950 he opened his law office in the family home on the corner of Main and Franklin Streets. He served as Grapevine City Attorney, was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Grapevine School District, and was President of the Board in 1968 and 1969.

As for myself, I was appointed city attorney in 1969 and have practiced law in Grapevine for 58 years. Most people know the rest of my story.

--William D. Tate

THE SURPRISINGLY CONVOLUTED STORY OF THE AUSTIN RANCH

Decades of Dudes descending on Grapevine

Austin Ranch, tucked away between Silver Lake and the DFW Hilton Lakes hotel, has promised visitors a rustic escape and a taste of the cowboy lifestyle for nearly three quarters of a century. It may then come as a surprise to learn that Austin Ranch, which seems to have been there forever, was in fact created from scratch by a serial promoter nicknamed “Mister Home Show,” and later purchased by a doctor and his wife, a registered nurse. Not a cowboy in the bunch.

The end of World War II marked a turning point for American lifestyles. Returning soldiers looked to start (or rebuild) lives in a vastly-changed, modern peacetime. To meet that, the Dallas Homebuilders’ Association saw an opportunity to create an annual “Home Show” that spotlighted the latest trends in homebuilding and furnishing. Their postwar shows were a huge success, due in no small part to the promotional efforts of the Executive Vice President of the Homebuilders Association, a man named Grover Godfrey.

But people were also glancing backwards to a simpler, vanished days, like those of the Old West. Sensing that trend, in 1946 Paul and Margarete Wiley converted their land way out in the country (five miles north of town) into the *Wiley Dude Ranch*. The enterprising couple jumped on the “dude ranch” phenomenon, offering visitors an easy, exotic escape to a land of trail rides, bunk beds, chuck wagons, and square dancing.

Curiously enough, these two trends would intersect.

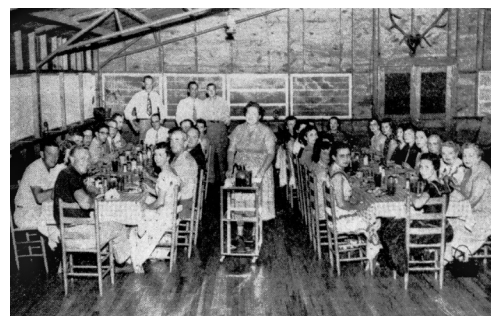
The Wileys kept their Dude Ranch operating at least until the early 1960s. As the new Grapevine Lake drew more visitors to the area, oth-

ers began considering similar ventures. In May 1953, Grover Godfrey announced the opening of “*Godfrey Ranch*,” two miles northeast of town, just off Highway 121 (now Highway 26), by the banks of Silver Lake. According to oral histories, the land had been owned by E. C. Hersey, a man who had helped engineer Lake Dallas decades earlier. There may have been a home on the property (it’s not clear), but in any case, Godfrey Ranch was soon to have a large barn-style stable as its centerpiece, plus dining facilities for 300, a dance terrace, as well as hunting, fishing, riding, boating and picnic facilities.

What kept Godfrey Ranch from being a proper dude ranch was the absence of guest houses. No overnight stays here; this was a resort. Mr. Godfrey was busy with an expanding home show empire, so he brought in Rosalie Adams, previously the “social and party hostess” at Denver’s Brown Palace Hotel, to manage the operation. She would have been well-prepared to cater to organizations who wanted a brief western fling.

In 1954 Dr. Frank H. Austin and his wife decided to open their *own* Dude Ranch a few miles northwest of town, along the banks of Grapevine Lake. Their home, which a newspaper reported as dating to

the 1800s, served as the center of activities, but they added a swimming pool, playground, guest-houses, and more. It was a smaller, homier operation than Godfrey’s Ranch - accommodating 50 guests and promising to serve nothing stronger than soft drinks. Dr. Austin was distant relative of Stephen F. Austin, so he borrowed some of the Austin mystique - and Stephen F. Austin’s old cattle brand -- and called his operation the “*Lazy S. F. Dude Ranch*.” That name shifted with time, becoming the “*Stephen F. Ranch*” and eventually the “*S. F. Austin Ranch*.”



1955: Phone company employees chow down at the *Lazy S F Ranch*

Back on the northeast side of town, Grover Godfrey did not lack for outsized vision. In 1955, numerous newspapers reported that he was about to acquire a giant cyclorama painting, 3 stories tall and 400 feet long, that depicted World War I. With the help of the American Legion he planned a special

-- *Continued on Page Four*



The *Austin Patio Ranch* included a small Western “ghost town” that these foreign exchange students rode past in 1960

CONTINUED FROM PAGE THREE

Grapevine's Austin Ranch has evolved with the decades

building to house the “*Pantheon De La Guerre*,” artwork which had first been exhibited at the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair. Nothing came of these plans. (The giant painting ended up in Kansas City.) Then in 1956 Godfrey announced he would be adding an outdoor amphitheater to seat 1500 people. The theater and its shows would resemble the “*Casa Manana*” Centennial extravaganzas that Fort Worth held in 1936 and 1937. This didn’t get built, either.

In 1956 a movie actor named Johnny Carpenter selected Godfrey’s ranch to film a low-budget Western he had written titled “*Jardine*.” Carpenter would also direct and star. The horse barn got “OK Corral” painted on its side, and a six-building western town set was assembled (no doubt inexpensively thanks to Godfrey’s homebuilder connections.) Local TV station WBAP reported on the novelty of having Hollywood come to Grapevine, but Johnny Carpenter was only a very minor Western star. His independent film ran out of money and was never released.

In 1957, Godfrey tried to turn the ranch into private club, with member dues of \$100 per year. It didn’t catch on. Now 68 years old, Grover Godfrey decided to retire from home shows and the ranch resort business, and Dr. Frank Austin stepped up as buyer. First rebranded the “Austin-Godfrey Ranch”, by the early 1960s it was named the “Austin Patio Ranch” to differentiate itself from Frank Austin’s Dude Ranch a few miles further west. The Patio Ranch settled into life as a countrified conference center, not unlike its role even now. It hosted everything from medical groups to

foreign car rallies, and was the site of several rodeos sponsored by the Grapevine Chamber of Commerce.

Perhaps managing two ranches became too much for the Austins, or perhaps simply times were changing. Their dude ranch vanishes from newspaper stories in the early 1960s,

while the Austin Patio Ranch was bought by Philip Whittlesey and managed by Clyde and Pat Stinson.

They kept the name, as well as Stephen F. Austin’s cattle brand. Pat Stinson would become the public face of the ranch for decades to come.

In a surprising development, a new Godfrey Ranch was under construction in 1965. Grover Godfrey was now 75 years old and living in Denton when he decided to revive his extravagant ideas once more. He bought land by Lake Dallas for a new 37-acre Godfrey Ranch - this time centered around a 5000-seat amphitheater that would host a spectacular “Buffalo Bill” show run by cowboy Jonny Rivers, just finishing up a stint at the New York World’s Fair. Newspapers carried photos of carpenters hard at work - but if the second Godfrey Ranch actually opened, it failed to make a splash. Grover Godfrey passed away three years later.

In the 1960s, even as the local land became domesticated, interest in the Old West continued. The Austin Patio Ranch hosted school kids and adult conferences. There were Sunday night BBQ dinners and horse-

back rides now fondly recalled by long-time residents. For many, the Austin Patio Ranch was their first job, at the pool or with the horses. Even the coming of DFW Airport didn’t affect the immediate rural feel... but in 1981, the growing local hotel industry certainly did.



Austin Patio Ranch in its heyday ca. 1970. The barn still there, even as an airport was coming.

In the fall of 1981, The DFW Hilton and Executive Conference Center broke ground on land that encompassed the ranch site. Hilton played up the area’s history with fanciful tales of how Bonnie and Clyde had hidden out there, but they also removed the old barn and ghost town buildings and replaced them with a climate-controlled conference center building. After all, horses could be trucked in when needed.

Whatever rural vibes may have vanished in the update, the revamped Austin Ranch has survived the decades. Now more scenic than rustic, “Austin Ranch DFW” remains a popular venue for weddings, corporate retreats, celebrations, and other events. And Silver Lake still beckons all comers with, as the Ranch website puts it, “a touch of Texas charm.”

--Larry Groebe

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