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CONTENTS

   Betsy Friauf and Michael Phillips \& 7

AN 1821 TRIP DOWN TRAMMEL'S TRACE
   Gary L. Pinkerton \& 47

HOW TEXANS OPPOSED CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION IN THE 1960S: EVIDENCE LETTERS TO FUTURE HOUSE SPEAKER JIM WRIGHT
   Neil Allen \& 68

HISTORIC SURVEY OF WASKOM, HARRISON COUNTY, TEXAS
   Thomas Speir \& 89

Books Reviewed

Captain James A. Baker of Houston, 1857-1941, by Kate Kirkland.
   Reviewed by George Cooper \& 120

Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown by Harold Rich.
   Reviewed by Charles Porter \& 123

   Reviewed by Carlos K. Blanton \& 125
A Serviceable Villain:  
Eugenics, The Fear of the “Underman,”  
and Anti-Democratic Discourse  
in Texas Thought and Culture, 1900-1940  

BY BETSY FRIAYF AND MICHAEL PHILLIPS

In the first four decades of the twentieth century, Texas eugenicsists repeatedly sounded an alarm about an enemy within: the poor, the mentally ill, the intellectually deficient, sexual deviants, and congenital criminals. They warned that this biologically unfit mob might soon outnumber the intelligent and gifted within the state and bring civilization crashing down. Eugenicists were not successful in their campaign for sterilization laws they thought would improve the human stock in the state, but that does not mean they were ignored. The years 1900-1940 marked the high point of the eugenics movement in Texas. State legislators considered four bills that called for the coerced sterilization of the “unfit” in 1913, 1932, 1935, and 1937. They also debated a proposed law in 1923 that would have required engaged couples to receive a certificate of health from “a reputable physician” before they could receive a marriage license. All five eugenics-inspired laws failed. Although Texas legislators would not go so far as to deny the unfit the right to reproduce, they did not hesitate to curtail their right to vote.

The push for eugenics laws and to reduce voting stemmed from similar anxieties and became mutually reinforcing. Eugenicists declared repeatedly that democracy was dysgenic, not only a barrier to biologically improving the species but a threat to the very survival of the human race. If they could not prevent the unfit from reproducing through sterilization laws, eugenicists claimed that by denying the ballot to millions, they could at least prevent the state from being taken over politically by what one advocate of sterilization called “Undermen.”

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Hostility to democracy formed an essential part of the eugenics belief system. Eugenicists believed that biologically inferior voters -- identified by their poverty, their working-class jobs, their minority religion, culture, and language, and/or their skin color -- would demand a redistribution of the wealth created by their superiors and would impose their impulsive, ill-conceived priorities on the political process. Madison Grant, one of the nationally pre-eminent voices for eugenics, lamented that the advance of democracy led to “the transfer of power from the higher to the lower races, from the intellectual to the plebeian class . . .”, with the universal franchise resulting in electoral triumphs for foolish mediocrities. One promoter of eugenics read widely across the United States, Paul Popenoe, proclaimed democracy “dangerous,” while S.J. Holmes, a biologist at the University of California at Berkeley, dismissed it as a “fetish.”

The eugenicist idea that democracy might be a highway to hell gained traction in Texas. A nightmare vision of a maddened proletariat breeding a race of degenerates, and ushering in an historical epoch of crime, anarchy, and bloodthirsty revolution, echoed through political speeches, novels, school textbooks, and even fairground exhibits across Texas in the forty years before the United States’ entry in World War II. In response to the discontents produced by immigration and slowly increasing urbanization and industrialization, elites disdained the ballot, dehumanized the impoverished, and supported anti-immigration laws. Eugenicists despised democracy, they said, because they loved freedom. To them, freedom meant survival and improvement of the species, breeding a better human race uninjured by biological defect, and the protection of the property accumulated by the biologically superior men and women of wealth from the grasping hands of the unworthy masses.

To men like Dallas attorney Meriwether Dabney, the crawl toward a more democratic republic, begun with the abolition of slavery in 1865 and continuing with the women’s suffrage campaign in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, did not represent progress but a frightening march to the abyss. Dabney learned his blunt elitism and white supremacist ideology at the knees of his father, the Presbyterian minister Dr. Robert Dabney, a professor at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia who once served as Confederate Gen. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s chaplain during the Civil War. In 1867, the elder Dabney bitterly denounced the recent emancipation of slaves in
his book *A Defence [sic.] of Virginia (and Through Her, of the South)*. Rev. Dabney condemned abolitionism as "anti-scriptural" and tantamount to rebelling against the law of God. He portrayed the Civil War as a struggle between a truly Christian South and Northern heretics. The elder Dabney thought a straight line ran from the violent excesses of the French Revolution to the rise of so-called "Radical Republicans" in the United States during the Civil War and early Reconstruction era. "It will in the end become apparent to the world, not only that the conviction of the wickedness of slaveholding was drawn from sources foreign to the Bible, but that it is a legitimate corollary from that fantastic,atheistic, and radical theory of human rights, which made the Reign of Terror in France, which has threatened that country, and which now threatens the United States, with the horrors of Red-Republicanism," Robert Dabney wrote. At one point the elder Dabney declared, "We are sick of that arrogant and profane cant, which asserts man's 'capacity for self-government' as a universal proposition; which represents human nature as so good, and democratic government as so potent, that it is a sort of miraculous panacea, sufficient to repair all the disorders of man's condition. All this ignores the great truths, that man is fallen; that his will is disordered . . . that God, his owner and master, has ordained that he shall live under authority. What fruit has radical democracy ever borne, except factious oppression, anarchy, and the stern necessity for despotism?"

Robert Dabney left his native Virginia and began teaching philosophy, psychology, and political economy at the University of Texas in 1883. His son, Meriwether Dabney, would study English and philosophy, as well as Greek, Latin, and French, at the Austin university and would be offered a professorship in English literature there, which he would turn down. Meriwether did not inherit his father's piety, and even though he often referred to God and Christianity, he would dismissively refer to the "Christian cult, brotherhood of man, altruism, etc." in his writings. His prose was considerably less elevated than that of the Rev. Dabney, but his contempt for democracy proved no less blistering. Dabney opened his Dallas law practice in 1888 and quickly moved in the city's most influential circles while practicing law. In the years before the United States' entry into World War I, Meriwether Dabney urged the nation to shut the door to immigration by what he saw as racial inferiors from Eastern and Southern Europe and to eliminate the right to vote from all but the most intelligent
and talented white men. He saw talent and mental ability as rare commodities in a species barely ascended from its primate ancestors.

"To my mind the best proof of evolution is that ninety-five percent of the human race are so ape-like in animal stupidity and in being attracted to glittering baubles," Dabney said in a letter written sometime between 1913 and 1915 to his brother-in-law E.Y. Chapin complaining about the demands for voting rights by women and other disenfranchised groups. "It they are shiny, seem new and alluring, they will continue to grab them no matter how many apes before them have scorched their fingers. Man’s essential animalism is also demonstrated by the fact that he is lazy, greedy, and lascivious, won’t work if he can pilfer, has no foresight, and precisely like any ape believes that which he desires to believe. In some respects man, in his evolution, has not reached the stage of self protective development of a gopher or a squirrel."

Dabney saw voting rights for the oppressed as “glittering baubles.” Dabney habitually compared those who, unlike himself, had not benefitted from inherited wealth, to animals who needed to be controlled. Having such poor human materials to work with, Dabney argued, nations such as the United States (and by extension states like Texas) could only meet disaster by extending the franchise. “The trouble about a democracy is that things are settled by voting and ninety-five percent of the voters, not having the sense of an ant or squirrel in the summer, but having the vote, will ravage the stores of those who have laid up a few nuts when they could,” he wrote. “Like any other maddened baboon they will tear the whole fabric of civilization to pieces,” he insisted. Dabney believed that what he saw as an aristocracy of merit was the best form of government and he charged that democracy “by its very nature rejects the best and seeks the worst and is stumbling down into the mire.”

Dabney’s comments came in a period of turbulent economic, social, and political transformation. Dabney and his father saw the plantation past as idyllic. In a July 1893 letter Meriwether Lewis Dabney wrote blissfully of the pastoral Virginia of his childhood and compared it invidiously with his Dallas home. “I... love the Blue Mountains of Old Virginia,” he said. “There is something particularly stimulating about them to the imagination and also the moral feelings. It seems to me when I get among them that I am a man again with a soul, while on this flat plain I am but a money-earning brute,
seeking to wrest a dollar from the greedy, cheating swarm of rascals around me ... I don't think the history of the world will show where an inland prairie country has produced anything out of the ordinary beyond money getting." Dabney must have found North Central Texas at the turn of the century soul-crushing. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the continued spread of railroad networks, then an oil boom in Texas, and the rise of Dallas as a regional banking capital. These trends spurred urbanization in the Lone Star State. As historian Randolph Campbell points out, by 1920, four Texas cities were worthy of the name, with Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio all boasting of populations of more than 100,000. Instead of Blue Mountains, Dabney watched office buildings rise in the alternately too hot and too cold prairie.

At the same time that Texas had its first experience of genuine urbanization, the violence of the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910, and the demand by landowners for agricultural labor all spurred immigration into Texas. The immigrants to Texas were more regionally, ethnically and racially diverse in the early twentieth century than their forebears. Prior to the twentieth century, most new arrivals in Texas hailed from other Southern states. The number of foreign-born immigrants to Texas, however, increased noticeably from 1900 to 1920 when Dabney entered the most active phase of his public life. The state's total population almost tripled from 1.6 million in 1880 to about 4.7 million between 1880 and 1920, while the percentage of foreign-born Texans climbed from 5.9 percent at the start of the twentieth century to 7.8 percent by 1920. Mexican immigration especially increased, with approximately 100,000 Mexicans fleeing the mayhem south of the Rio Grande between 1910 and 1920. The Mexican population in Texas reached 700,000, about 12 percent of the total population, by 1930 (compared to the 6.5 percent of the total population Mexicans and Mexican Americans represented in 1850.)

Mexican immigration in particular must have seemed ominous to Dabney. He ridiculed those who thought that the imperialistic American military interventions in Mexico in 1913 and 1916 were an opportunity to civilize a country Dabney dismissed as "savage." Dabney was particularly outraged by the pre-dawn raid on Columbus, New Mexico led by followers of Mexican revolutionary leader Francisco "Pancho" Villa on March 9, 1916, which prompted a retaliatory U.S. Army invasion led by Gen. John "Blackjack" Pershing that aimed to
capture or kill the Mexican militia commander. In Dabney’s words, “I take not the slightest interest in educating throat-cutting Mexicans . . . I have never found arising in my heart emotions of loving kindness for the far off, and particularly the persistently wicked . . . I cannot understand the theory that seems to possess all the American people who do not live near the border, viz., that the Mexican people will become eventually sweetly mild and reasonable if we continue to let them rob Americans and thus follow the practice of the Zoo with the boa constrictors; that is, keep on feeding them skinned rabbits until their bloodthirsty appetite is satiated and they become mild, loving, and reasonable.”

In Dabney’s mind, the Mexicans he despised seemed to be invading the state, not just in the farmlands of South Texas, but his home base of Dallas. There, they joined with other immigrants Dabney imagined could only bring harm. By the early 1920s, Dallas neighborhoods like Deep Ellum had become magnets for Jewish, Mexican, and Italian immigrants. Meanwhile, Mexican barrios arose along Eagle Ford Road, now known as Singleton Boulevard, and the so-called “El Cemento Chico” or “Cement City” in West Dallas near the Lone Star Cement Plant. Between 1910-1920, the percentage of Dallas residents who had parents born overseas increased by 51 percent, with a large percentage coming from Eastern and Southern European and Latin American backgrounds. At the beginning of the century, under 16 percent of immigrants living in Dallas came from Eastern and Southern Europe, Mexico, Central America and South American, or Asia. By 1920, more than 54 percent of immigrants in Dallas came from these parts of the world and the largest single group from Mexico.

Dabney made no effort to hide his disgust at this growing diversity. “[M]ongrelized Asiatics, Greeks, Levantines, Southern Italians, and sweepings of the Balkans, of Poland and of Russia” filled the urban landscape, Dabney complained in a speech, “Is Civilization Returning to Barbarism?” delivered to the influential Dallas Critic Club on December 4, 1922. During World War I, Dabney expressed to friends his horror at what he saw as the dysgenic consequences of that conflict. “[S]talwart, clean-cut” Anglo-Saxon men died by the millions in Europe, Dabney wrote, to “preserve liberty and happiness for the swarms of maggots of the human kind I see wriggling in the vile heaps we call our cities. Are our sons to give their lives to preserve
the happiness in rottenness and freedom for vice of these mongrel wretches, none of whom are going to sacrifice anything?"

Like Texans today, Dabney lived in a world defined by the intersection of race and economic class, but the language of race differed significantly from that of today. Race is meaningless from a biological standpoint and, therefore, the number and meaning of racial categories such as “white,” “black,” “brown,” and so on differ over time. Randomly defined on wildly varying criteria such as skin tone and color, hair texture, language, culture and geographic origin, the number of racial categories expanded or contracted mostly due to the economic and political needs of the time. Dabney saw racial differences between those of European descent and “the Australian Black Man or African Hottentot” who, he said, had “not developed the capacity to advance even to barbarism,” between whites and “American Indians and many Asiatic tribes” who “stopped with barbarism” in their cultural evolution, and between “Caucasians” and “the Mongrel inhabitants of Central and South America” who “having reached a low civilization, are incapable of going forward” and were instead “disintegrating.”

Like many elites of his time, however, Dabney constructed an elaborate racial hierarchy that ranked different categories of Europeans and their descendants on an ascending scale from animal-like to the human pinnacle. Leading racial theorists of Dabney’s time, such as eugenicists like Madison Grant, Henry Fairfield Osborn, and William Z. Ripley believed that so-called Caucasians did not constitute one “white” race, and could be divided into three major “subspecies” with varying levels of intelligence and worth: the lowest category, the Mediterraneans centered primarily in Southern Europe (who also occupied the Middle East and North Africa), the middle category, the Alpines (located mostly in Central Europe and parts of Eastern Europe and Western Asia); and the cream of the Caucasian racial crop, the Nordics of Northern and much of Western Europe. Only Nordics were fully developed humans. Jews were not considered part of the Caucasian family. They, along with Poles, Czechs, Russians, Greeks, Italians, and other non-Nordics, were inferior in terms of mental ability and character to their British and Scandinavian and other Northern European neighbors.

By the 1920s, American elites used this racial schema to rationalize the wide gap between rich and poor whites by explaining that the im-
poverished were also less than fully white and were stymied by their unfortunate biological differences with their better-off peers. These racial ideas deeply shaped Texas society and provided the foundation for Dabney’s worldview. To Dabney, the new immigrants that so disturbed him lacked the wherewithal to adequately function in a sophisticated society and constituted barbarians who had slipped through the gate.

Dabney became a voice of the eugenics movement in Texas and worried that the wave of inferior immigrants pouring into the United States corrupted American culture, sowed political and economic instability and even threatened the survival of the human race. At the start of the twentieth century, Texas eugenicists sounded the alarm that immigration had contributed to what they insisted was a wave of feeblemindedness in Texas. Eugenicists sought to guide human evolution by encouraging the supposedly biologically fit to have more children and to prevent the allegedly unfit from reproducing. Retrograde immigrants would disrupt this project, they argued.

Eugenics had a long history in Texas by the time Dabney began his law career. A Texas surgeon, Gideon Lincecum, in 1853 had proposed a law allowing the state to castrate criminals and other “defectives.” During much of the 1850s, he lobbied for such legislation. Beginning four decades later, another Texas doctor, Ferdinand Eugene Daniel, promoted similar ideas. His modes of communication were a series of medical journals he edited in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and papers published across the country. To Dabney, eugenics was proven science. “The researches of Darwin established the fact that progress is by evolution, controlled by heredity, like produces like, the good mated with the good produce offspring reproducing characteristics of the parents,” he said. “[Founding British eugenicist Francis] Galton, by painstaking and extended investigation and by the collection of a great mass of statistics, has shown that capacity is transmitted and that families having it are limited...[I]ntelligence and genius...are a matter largely of family and men of genius drawn from a few families.” Dabney saw immigrants pouring into Texas in the early twentieth century as lacking “men of genius.”

He thought that “new” immigrants were not only threatening the nation biologically but also infecting the body politic with dangerous Marxism. Texans witnessed the rise of numerous radical political and social reform movements between the 1880s and the 1920s, with the
Greenback Party, the Southern Farmers’ Alliance, the People’s (Populist) Party, various socialist parties, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People challenging not just the iron domination of the segregationist Democratic Party, but in many cases capitalist hegemony itself. Reform movements exhausted Dabney. “As long as a man can secure a job of digging potatoes or sprinkling the streets or something equally useful, why should he concern himself with the frenetic yelping of uplifters, reformers and politicians, pre-millennial dawners, holy-rollers, free-lovers, or any other element of a half-educated neurotic society?” he asked. “... Just let the demagogues shout that the people are not really ruling till they get this supposed right and it will take with all the rapidity and beneficence of the itch.”

Resistance movements portended a grim future, Dabney thought. Southern and Eastern Europeans, particularly Jews, raised the specter of revolution in his mind. Elites should take active steps to prevent the ignorant working class, poor whites, and even gullible college students from falling prey to the siren song of radicalism. Though he was the child of a college professor, Dabney believed it was time to curb free speech in higher education as a means of preventing revolution. “... [F]ar too many men are tolerated in our colleges who are busy poisoning the rising generation with doctrines all right for Russian Jews but not to be tolerated by any free Anglo-Saxon soul,” Dabney said in a November 23, 1917 letter to a relative. “However, the only reason they are more dangerous than others is that they enjoy the peculiar privilege of braying their nonsense into the tender ears of the young and moulding their minds while plastic. They should be rooted out of every college, and particularly out of state-controlled colleges.”

In Dabney’s imagination, in the teens and the 1920s the rich constituted the oppressed and the poor and working class the oppressors. Even if his father had depicted abolition of slavery in the United States as one of the chief tragedies of the nineteenth century, Dabney told one friend that he did not, for the most part, regret the South losing the Civil War, except to the degree it stirred political restlessness among the white underclass. “[A]s the negroes put it, ‘the bottom rail got on top,’” Dabney wrote, resulting in “the emerging of these ‘half-strainers’ from the bottom to the top. These the war liberated much more than it did the Africans. This is the day
of the poor white in the South ...” Dabney frequently used terms like “Mongrels” and “half-strainers” to imply that the white working class was racially impure and therefore biologically tainted. In a speech to the Dallas Critic Club on January 24, 1921, he described the successes of labor unions as “the new tyranny,” an “explosive, violent, destructive, and unbearable” subjugation of the rich by the masses through strikes, boycotts, and “universal suffrage.” This turmoil stifled investment and job creation because reformers imposed higher wages and limits on working hours. “Great plunder has been gathered by these methods, and in doing so, the war cries and shibboleths of democracy have been freely used; this pure class exploitation has been called democracy and many have been deceived thereby,” he complained. The only remedy, Dabney said, would be “open shop” laws that would prohibit workers from being required to join labor unions or to contribute dues to them at a worksite when a majority of workers voted to organize there. “The labor’s union is met by the employee’s open shop,” Dabney told his audience of Dallas leaders. “The labor lobby, bullying legislatures, is already considerably neutralized by the counter lobbying of farmers’ associations, merchants’ associations, manufacturers’ associations and the like, all of whom are not on the job.” Dabney wanted to double down on such efforts to thwart Jacobin democracy in the workplace.

Dabney not only wanted to restrict free speech rights at colleges and universities and undermine unions, he wanted to roll back the tide toward Red Republicanism his father had decried more than a half century earlier. He desired a return to what he believed had been the rule of a “natural aristocracy” established by the Founding Fathers. That aristocracy did not include women, who Dabney feared would intensify a trend toward social reform he saw as suicidal. In a November 1914 letter, he inveighed against women’s suffrage. “Taxes steadily grow, wages increase, the cost of living goes up and business has fewer opportunities to get its breath between cataclysms,” he wrote to Chapin. “Now if the girls jump into this maelstrom and add their shrill outcries it will be the finishing touch. When the fairer half of creation dive in, the serious question will arise whether there will be sufficient time saved out of the scraps of universal uplift to get the meals on the table.”

The last thing the United States needed was an expansion of democracy, Dabney thought, since democracy was undermining
civilization itself in the early twentieth century. Dabney urged the
country to return to the system of government he said the framers of
the United States Constitution intended, an elitist republic directed
by the “superior man . . . the torch bearer of the race . . .” Dabney’s
“superior man,” of necessity, needed the management skills of “me­
diocre man,” Dabney’s term for those of average ability. Mediocre
man, in turn, he said, “accepts the work of genius, and performs the
interminable and complex tasks necessary to construction and pres­
servation of what the superior man devises.” Mediocre man would
submit to the dominance of superior man, he predicted, because of
the physical comforts created by ingenious elites. Dabney failed to
specify how the mass of middle men could be convinced to submit to
political dominance by their presumably smarter superiors, but both
superior man and middle man faced a clear and present danger from
below: the possibility of revolt by “under man, the congenital savage,
incapable of civilization, hating it, and desirous of reverting to the
primitive, under the unchangeable biological law of his being.”

For all his creativity, Dabney’s superior man was too clever by half.
By curing diseases, improving food production and distribution, and
by advancing human comfort and safety, he had ensured the sur­
vival and rapid reproduction of “atavistic” undermen who, as they
increased in numbers, were able to demand political reform and a
redistribution of wealth. “As society has advanced from the primitive
to the semi-civilized . . . its functioning has been biologically adverse
to the best strains and favorable to the worst,” Dabney said.

“Undermen” used democracy to seize the wealth created by su­
perior man, he claimed. “Democratic institutions have placed upon
the upperman increasing burdens,” he said. “. . . The voice of de­
mocracy is ever to tax and harass the most capable . . . The superior
man exerts himself and secures a profit; it is taxed, he works harder,
and it is surtaxed. He pays taxes on all his property, his savings, his
life insurance, his land, his personal property, his money, his income,
franchise taxes, corporation taxes, taxes on his right to work, taxes
on the product of his work . . . To prevent his children from sinking
in the social scale, he has few, and as his burdens increase, his fam­
ily diminishes. Democracy, therefore, is dysgenic, tending to restrict
the reproduction of the best strains, and to promote large families
among the unfit. The race is gradually milked of its best blood at the
top, while it reproduces the worst at the bottom . . .”
As Dabney put it:

The barbarian, the underman as we may call him, finds the efforts to sustain the burden of existing in such a society more and more irksome. Loathing sustained effort and congenitally incapable of either appreciating or securing its rewards, he observes that its prizes are not for him, that his only portion in such a society is increasing toil, without any appreciable chance of rising, and that his savage appetites and lusts are restrained by laws which he hates... [L]ike the Red communists, [he] believes that if society could be rid of all its superior elements, of all restraints of religion, ties of family, rights of property... a peaceful Arcadia of easy living would be attained... [T]he undermen become preponderant either by birth or immigration, the social structure cracks and gives way, [and] the underman rises and smashes that civilization which he can never restore, often practically extirpating those of superior mentality.

Dabney told his Dallas audience in 1922 that the rise of the undermen could be prevented only by educating “superior men and women” that they had a moral duty to increase the size of their families; by discouraging birth control in “the upper and better classes” while promoting contraception among the lower classes; through banning marriage among or sterilizing “criminals, lunatics, idiots, defectives and degenerates”; and by ending “promiscuous immigration” into the United States by the “dregs of Europe and Asia.” He colorfully added, “The United States is a nation, not a sewer.” Dabney died July 11, 1923, shortly after his speeches to the Dallas Critic Club. If he were a lone voice in early twentieth-century Texas decrying the dangers of democracy, Dabney would be at best a footnote in the state’s history. To the contrary, Dabney articulated anxieties widely suffered among elites that translated into a war against voting rights waged by the Texas establishment in the first four decades of the twentieth century. These laws aimed at preventing another rebellion against the political establishment such as had been waged by Populists, socialists and their allies in the 1890s and at the opening of the
twentieth century. In 1902, the state imposed for the first time a poll tax. Set originally at $1.50 (with some counties adding surcharges), the poll tax roughly equaled an entire day's wages for many farm workers, especially African Americans. The state's chief poll tax proponent, former slave owner Alexander Terrell (who served as a judge, in the Texas Senate from 1876 to 1884, and in the state House from 1891-1892 and 1903-1905), said that he supported the poll tax not just as a means of eliminating black voting, but also to disenfranchise "the thriftless, idle, and semi-vagrant element of both races." The effect of the poll tax on voting proved devastating, with the Texas electorate shrinking by two-thirds.

In 1903, the state made a more determined effort to specifically eliminate black voting, with the Legislature passing what became known as the Terrell election law, which required parties that won more than 100,000 votes to hold primaries and which allowed eligible parties to determine who could vote in those primaries. The state Democratic Party followed up by establishing a whites-only primary system. Following the collapse of the state Republican Party in Texas in the 1870s and the Populists in the 1890s, the Democrats enjoyed an almost complete monopoly on elective office. African Americans could vote in general elections, but the only meaningful contests were in the Democratic primaries they could no longer participate in. Although a series of Supreme Court decisions starting in 1927 undermined the white primary, the Terrell laws and subsequent revisions rendered African Americans politically powerless until national civil rights legislation in the 1960s.

The number of eligible voters still had not shrunk enough, according to some Texas elites. In a 1927 book distributed in Dallas schools, former district Superintendent Justin Kimball insisted that uninformed, lower-class voters tended to fall under the sway of unqualified but slick candidates. "Ignorant or corruptible citizens can always be counted on to vote, although they usually vote wrong," he wrote.

Dabney's and Kimball's message about the dangers of the dysgenic underman and of the universal franchise were reflected in what Texas public schools taught children from 1900 to 1940. The Dallas school board first adopted a pro-eugenics textbook, *New Biology* by W.M. Smallwood, Ida L. Reveley, and Guy A. Bailey, on March 1, 1926, and stuck with this book for years. "There are two ways of bringing about
human progress,” the authors stated in the 1924 edition of the book. “The first is by improving the environment, the second consists of seeking a better inheritance with which to begin life. This is called eugenics . . . ” The authors lengthened the section on eugenics from two to four pages from the 1924 to the 1934 edition and in the later version of the book they implied that recent immigrants had brought an increased prevalence of biological defects into the American population. “Man has known for a long time he could improve his domestic animals and plants, and eugenics is the attempt to apply the same methods to human betterment,” the authors declared in the 1934 edition. “. . . The problem of immigration is complicated,” the authors noted, “but there is a distinct phase of it that is related to eugenics. What is the connection?” The textbook didn’t clearly answer the question, but clearly suggested that recent immigration damaged the eugenic health of the nation.

New Biology taught that not just intellect, but traits like honesty and a work ethic were in-born. “[General] ability and a tendency to industry and thrift are qualities that can be inherited,” the authors informed Dallas students. “The men and women who possess such mental traits carry on the business of the country and pay taxes, not only to support the government, but also to care for the idle, the shiftless, and the criminal. If we have inherited those traits of ability and industry, we should strive to keep them unimpaired and strengthen them, so that we may pass them on to our children, in order that the next generation shall possess men and women who will be able to advance human progress beyond our best effort.” Smallwood and the other authors indirectly suggested that strict and highly selective immigration policies might be a way to ensure that Americans keep certain traits “unimpaired.”

Another popular biology textbook of the time (adopted by the Dallas school district on March 10, 1942), Truman Jesse Moon’s Biology for Beginners, argued that the brain structures of advanced “Caucasians” biologically differed from those of other races, who therefore could be assumed to be physically unqualified for citizenship. “There is more structural difference between the lower primates (lemur) and the chimpanzee and the gorilla than there is between these higher apes and man,” Moon declared. “Also, there is a greater difference between the lowest type of savage man and the highest type of civilized man, than there is between the savage and the ape.” In short,
Dallas students were led to believe that in the world there were literal undermen, races more animal-like than human. Moon makes clear who some of these peoples are: some “Australian and African tribes.” Radical democracy in America, thus, threatened to leave matters of policy up to not to the superior, but the ape-like.

In textbooks adopted by the Dallas school district, white supremacist lessons, with an implied warning about radical democracy, spanned the curriculum. A 1927 world history textbook told students that black men and women were “dark of skin . . . [and] even darker of mind, for the light of civilization had not yet reached them.” These textbooks planted the idea in students’ minds that the imagined gaps in civilization between whites and other racial groups stemmed from biology and raised questions as to whether African Americans, Latino/as, or Native Americans should qualify as citizens in a modern nation. No less than Dabney, Dallas school books questioned the wisdom of democracy and suggested that people of color could threaten social stability if armed with the vote.

Poor people should not vote either, if the school textbooks were to be believed. Texas students were also told that Founding Fathers like George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson abhorred granting the unqualified the franchise and intended the United States to be a republic ruled by financial, cultural and educational aristocrats. History texts insisted that the Founding Fathers saw wealth as a mark of character. Textbooks praised what authors described as the undemocratic nature of the American Revolution and the United States Constitution. Men like James Madison placed checks on popular will in the Constitution to prevent the horrors of “mob rule.” The men who wrote the U.S. Constitution realized that men without property lacked the intelligence and the discipline to contribute as citizens and therefore wisely denied them the vote, according to the authors of the Record of America published in 1935 and adopted by the Dallas school board four years later. The Revolutionary Generation, the Dallas text said, “had little faith in the ability of people as a whole to maintain self-control and wisdom in government. They had no confidence in the man without property . . . a man who had failed to [accumulate property] . . . would be regarded as shiftless, lazy, or incompetent, and not deserving a voice in the government of others.” Founders like James Madison wrote the Constitution “to retain power in the hands of those who were least radical, and to set
School textbooks widely used in Texas also suggested other forms of government offered more attractive alternatives to what Robert Dabney had called "red republicanism." The school text *Our World Today and Yesterday: A History of Modern Civilization* offered students nothing but kind words for such ruthless autocrats as Benito Mussolini and his fascist regime in Italy. By crushing labor unions, students were taught, Mussolini had brought calm to Italian society and launched an economic renaissance for the Southern European nation. "He [Mussolini] has chosen a ministry made up of capable men and has straightened up the badly demoralized finances of the country," the textbook told its high school readership. "He and his followers are accused of suppressing liberty and downing the communists by violence. Nevertheless, he has done much to do away with strikes and to reestablish conditions as they were before the economic demoralization of the war [World War I] set in."

The campaign against the reproduction of the unfit was seen as parallel and complimentary to disenfranchisement efforts, which would prevent the revolution and chaos the underman always threatened. Even generally left-leaning eugenics activists in Texas, such as Julian Huxley who taught at Rice Institute in Houston from 1913-1916, worried that democracy was, as Dabney put it, dysgenic. The wise management of society would require those of lesser intelligence to surrender political authority to their intellectual superiors. "I think it would be well if we asked ourselves whether our present brand of democracy is calculated to give us the best organs of social control and differentiation," Huxley said during a series of talks he delivered as a guest lecturer at Rice Institute in September and October 1924. "The advantage of democracy is the raising of the condition of the mass of the people to a good average. The curse is the tendency to pull down what is above the average to the level of the average's mediocrity. A democracy of material opportunity freely surrendering itself to the guidance of an aristocracy of thought -- that seems to me to sum up pretty closely the biological ideal for society."

Throughout the teens and the 1920s, eugenicsists did all they could to alert the public that time was running out to save the republic from savages. Eugenics supporters staged "Better Baby" contests across the country while the nation's first "Fitter Family" competition was held in Topeka, Kansas in 1920. Often sponsored by groups like the
American Eugenics Society, the baby and family contests unfolded in Philadelphia and other cities nationwide. Display boards “revealed with flashing lights that every fifteen seconds a hundred dollars of your money went for the care of persons with bad heredity, that every forty-eight seconds a mentally deficient person was born in the United States, and that only every seven and a half minutes did the United States enjoy the birth of ‘a high-grade person’ . . .” Eugenicists used the Better Baby contests at the Texas State Fair to encourage the more prolific reproduction of the fit. At a 1914 State Fair contest in Dallas, parents willingly subjected 500 babies to a battery of tests, such as skull measurements, conducted by doctors. Eugenicists believed that skull size correlated to intelligence, i.e. that bigger heads indicated bigger brains, which in turn meant higher intelligence. (Actually, larger skulls generally correlate to body size.)

Doctors also believed that skull shape provided evidence of a superior or inferior mind and character. Long, so-called dolichocephalic skulls, eugenicists believed, denoted high IQ and advanced evolution, while shorter, brachycephalic skulls marked stunted intellectual development. The search for biological perfection at such contests went beyond skull dimensions, however, with doctors documenting “the most minute defection physically or mentally as to even consider the finger dimensions and maturity of hair and the like . . .” at the Pure Food and Better Babies Exposition in Dallas in May 1914. It was unclear how the medical judges scientifically defined “maturity of hair.” Even as the owners of “cattle, chickens and pigs” earned blue ribbons elsewhere on the fairgrounds, parents could win $15 for having the “best” child, any class, and $5 for the best twins and triplets.

The white, blond offspring of elite families who prevailed at the Better Baby contests at the Texas State Fair and similar competitions met eugenicists’ Nordic profile and thus, by blood, earned the right to rule. Promoters of such contests claimed they could teach parents how to upgrade even defective children. As a column from Mothers Magazine reprinted by the Dallas Morning News put it, “The intention is to make the average parent realize that the observation of certain methods will enable to them to improve their babies, even when much below the standard, and they will be taught how to accomplish the improvement and to correct deficiencies.” The writer, however, urged society to improve the human stock, presumably through
selective breeding, just as similar methods had produced faster race horses and cattle that produced more meat. “The Government has been very liberal in its expenditure of money . . . with the object of advancing the standards of our domestic animals . . . But until now the greatest National asset we have ever had or ever will have – the American child – has been utterly ignored in the Government campaign for ‘better products.’” As a 1913 Dallas Morning News story promoting a Better Babies show in Fort Worth put it, these competitions were “a popular yet scientific movement to insure better babies and a better race.” Eugenics was offered as a method towards that goal. A. Caswell Ellis, a University of Texas educational psychologist who long devoted himself to popularizing science, appeared at the 1914 Better Babies contest to rally those in attendance to the cause of selective breeding and the rest of the eugenics program. He opened by flattering the crowd, insisting that, “Texas babies are better babies than the babies of any other state,” before he “lightly touched on eugenics.”

Mary T. Watts of the National Eugenics Society, described by the Dallas Morning News as the founder of the “better babies” movement, arrived in the city to launch a “Fitter Families” contest during the State Fair in October 1924 to “interest people in racial betterment and stronger and more virile families. Physical and psychological tests would be administered by members of the Southern Methodist University psychology department while geneticists from Texas A&M College would make presentations on “inheritability and family trait features.” During the Fitter Families Contest at the 1925 State Fair, organizers used guinea pigs to exhibit how traits were inherited in “both hybrids and pure bloods.” Dr. H.L. Gosline, the Dallas Child Guidance Center’s director and psychiatrist in chief, told a Morning News reporter that “Human characteristics are inherited in exactly the same manner and proportion as they are in guinea pigs . . . With this in mind, it is the aim of the fitter families contests to create interest in better quality children.”

Intentionally or not, the Better Baby and Fitter Family contestants provided a sharp contrast to the “human oddities,” who were often men and women of color, presented for entertainment at the Texas State Fair’s “freak shows.” From the early 1890s through the first decade of the twentieth century, African American conjoined twins (or as such individuals were called in that era, “Siamese twins”) Millie and
Christine, alternately identified as “Millie Christine,” drew crowds at the segregated fair. The women had four arms and four legs but shared a torso and amazed audiences as one twin spoke French and the other German. The twins accompanied each other, singing in alto and soprano simultaneously, and danced to polka music. Meanwhile, the 1907 State Fair featured a “freak captured in the hinterland of South Africa” with “a face in every detail similar to a monkey” and “feet and hands... long and monkey-like.”

From the earlier days of the State Fair, black and brown people performed as primitive “savages” from around the world and were displayed like gorillas and chimpanzees in natural habitats. In 1894, a replica of a Dahomey Village drew visitors to the fair midway. “You can form some sort of idea of how they live in ‘darkest Africa,’ if you visit the Dahomey Village in the rear of the race course grand stand,” a newspaper promised. Spectators could see Africans performing on “quaint and peculiar musical instruments” as they played “war songs... not so entrancing to the cultivated ear as a Straus waltz.” Among the inhabitants of the temporary Dahomean Village was “the only cannibal child born in the United States,” given the name of “Texas.” Readers were told that the tribe deferred to local laws and did not nourish the youngster with human fluids but on chicken blood instead. The 1905 fair starred thirty-two members of the Bontoc Igorrote nation from the far northern part of the Philippines. Truman Hunt, a former physician turned entertainment entrepreneur, and another showman, Richard Schneidewind (like Hunt, a Spanish-American War veteran) brought competing bands of Igorrotes to the United States for exhibition, and had promised them handsome wages in return for them exaggerating their cultural practices. Instead, many of the Igorrotes ultimately ended up penniless and stranded. In Dallas, they dwelled in a duplication of a native village dubious in accuracy, and stood scantily clad. The Igorrotes practiced throwing spears and dined on dogs for their evening meal in front of fascinated and horrified white audiences. The Dallas Morning News left readers with the impression that Igorrotes were immune to new ideas. “It is said that the Igorrotes have made no progress in civilization since their arrival in America, the education advantages of the great land failing wholly influence them, and that they will appear at the State Fair in their original savage state, dog-eating custom and all.” The Igorrotes’ “savagery” extended to the homicidal. “In the party will
be three or four famous chiefs, each with a record as a head hunter,” the *Dallas Morning News* promised when the “tribe” was scheduled to return to the city in 1907.

Beyond the State Fair, non-whites were offered as human oddities to ticket buyers. The Sells-Floto Circus toured across the United States and across Texas in the early twentieth century, including shows in Dallas. Late in the second decade of the twentieth century, a Texas railroad worker named Pasqual Pinon, billed as the “two-headed Mexican,” joined the troupe. He appeared to have a second, smaller face with a nose and immobile eyes and a mouth growing out of his forehead. Carnival barkers told audiences that his second head at one point could speak but that the face eventually lost the ability to move. One writer contends that the second face was a large tumor outfitted with prosthetics and another that the entire “second head” was a fake.”

*The Dallas Morning News* informed its readership that the savages on display at the fair did not measure up to eugenics ideals. A 35-year-old “Australian Wild Girl” exhibited in 1894 weighed only 35 pounds and had a “head smaller than any ordinary baby’s.” A “Professor Fowler” pronounced her “the missing link in Darwin’s theory between man and brute creation.” The Texas State Fair and similar extravaganzas routinely presented non-whites as Dabney’s dangerous undermen -- savage, small-brained, deformed, impervious to progress and as headhunters and cannibals. Fair-goers were presented two alternatives: a world filled with the alleged human near-perfection at the Better Babies and Fitter Families contests, or the supposed human horrors on the Midway. The dangerous trend toward dysgenic democracy opened a gate to a biological flood: a rising tide of color against white world supremacy, as a leading eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard put it in the title of his 1920 bestselling book, with its attending wave of feeblemindedness, deformity, and disability.

White eugenicists routinely demeaned African Americans, ranking them the lowest when comparing the intellects of racial groups. African American elites, however, often turned out to be surprisingly ambivalent about eugenics and about the role of the masses in leading society. In a 1903 essay, W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the pre-eminent intellectual forces of the twentieth century, and one of the most important leaders of the African American community for the next six decades, articulated his vision of how African Americans would rise from a past shaped by slavery, poverty, and white racial violence. In
his essay “The Talented Tenth,” Du Bois embraced a decidedly elitist vision of racial uplift. A socialist, Du Bois abhorred revolutionary violence. He held decidedly mixed feelings about Soviet Union-style communism, and only joined the Communist Party USA in 1961 just days before his 93rd birthday as a protest against the American government’s oppression of the left. Du Bois nevertheless did not envision the black freedom struggle triumphing at the behest of the masses. In his “Talented Tenth” essay, he declared, “The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races.”

Later, Du Bois amplifies how he defined the ideal role of “The Talented Tenth: “[T]he college-bred Negro . . . is, as he ought to be, the group leader, the man who sets the ideals of the community where he lives, directs its thoughts and heads it social movements.” Du Bois also saw the Talented Tenth as a bulwark against the “submerged tenth,” which he demonized as “criminals, prostitutes, and loafers.” Authors Gregory Michael Dorr and Angela Logan argue that Du Bois and prominent African American educator Thomas Wyatt Turner embraced “assimilationist eugenics . . . a perspective that viewed racial differences as being insignificant, but adopted more fundamental eugenic notions about distinctions between ‘fit’ and ‘unfit’ people.” Men like Du Bois rejected the idea of white supremacy, but believed that society would be best served by increased reproduction on the part of the biologically and intellectually gifted of all races and reduced fertility among the eugenically degenerate to be found in all colors. Du Bois also believed that part of the African American race had been polluted by white rapists who had produced with their black victims mixed-race children who biologically carried the criminal tendencies of their fathers. If he rejected the existence of significant intellectual and moral differences between whites and blacks, he nevertheless accepted the eugenicist idea that biology to a large degree was destiny. As Du Bois put it, “some were fitted to know and some to dig.” Partly in response to the better baby contests organized by white eugenicists, the NAACP’s national field secretary William P. Pickens launched a campaign in the mid-1920s for local NAACP chapters to hold baby contests that would serve three major
purposes. Entry fees for the contests would fund a political effort to end the pandemic of lynching in the United States. Secondly, the contests would promote healthier care of babies in the black community. Third, the baby contests would encourage the Talented Tenth to raise larger families.

Leaders in the Texas African American community felt ambivalent about eugenics. The Dallas Express, an African American newspaper, regularly mocked Nordicism -- the idea popular among eugenicists that Nordics were superior not only to African Americans and other people of color but also to other Europeans. “The accident of color is not a God given barrier as worshippers of the Nordic would have it,” said a 1925 Dallas Express editorial condemning black men and women who accommodated white racists. “Men used to be known by their location and citizenship, not by their race. Paul, the apostle, though a Jew, was a Roman citizen. Black men were also. It is only American prejudice that has made a god out of white, and race a thing to be worshipped.”

In another 1925 story, The Express mocked Virginia Registrar of Vital Statistics Dr. W.A. Plecker who predicted that because of “miscegenation,” in the year 2000 or 3000 “all of the inhabitants of America will be brownskinned.” He called for strict laws against interracial marriage across the country. The Express pointed out that Nordic rapists of black women, during slavery and afterwards, had produced most of the United States’ large mixed-race population. “[T]he freakish complexions and lightened skins of ‘Negroes’ . . . have resulted from the age long helplessness of the Negro woman and the attraction which they have seemingly held for the males of other bloods,” the Express writer said. “It is not the fault of the Negro that the ‘best blood’ of America flows through the veins of so many of those who are now . . . classed [as black.] . . . [T]his problem like others, had its beginnings in the belief that black men and women had no rights that others were bound to respect . . . Let the laws protect black women as well as others and there will be fewer mulattoes.” The fact that whites had so often transgressed racial boundaries, the Express said, contained “little that is complimentary to the Nordics.”

The Dallas Express delighted in turning the racial hierarchy created by eugenicists upside down, sometimes suggesting there was scientific evidence of black superiority. An April 18, 1925 story pointed out that African American test subjects during World War I withstood
exposure to the poison gas “tetra-nitroaniline after NORDIC blonds and Jewish chemists had keeled over at a laboratory at Boundrock, N.J.” As the story noted:

Group after group of white men were tried and unable to withstand the action of the fumes. Finally, Negroes were ordered to make the experiments, and were found to be able to withstand the poisons.

It is said that the participants in the experiments were graded as to complexion to determine if the dark-skinned men could withstand the deadly fumes, and they did. It is said that the lightest skinned keeled over in a week, and were resuscitated with difficulty. It was found that the dark-skinned Negroes withstood the fumes and enabled the chemists to complete the experiment.

The Express believed the story punched holes in contemporary racial theories. “It is said that open confession is good for the soul and surely leading chemical experts of the country should feel much better now since they have gotten off their chests something about the ‘superiority’ of Negroes,” the newspaper said. The newspaper also delighted in using the language of eugenicists against them, employing the categories of mental disability coined by Henry H. Goddard to describe white criminals. “White Moron Admits Assault on Little Negro Girl,” screamed a banner headline in the October 3, 1925 issue. (In the IQ scale developed in 1910 by psychologist Goddard, so-called morons were those subjects with an IQ between 51-70 on the Stanford-Binet scale, “imbeciles” with an IQ between 26-50, and “idiots” an IQ score of 25 or below.)

Even if the newspaper rejected Nordic supremacism, however, eugenicist ideas sometimes crept into The Dallas Express, including the idea that the unfit might be breeding more rapidly than the fit. “[T]he number of persons confined in hospitals for the insane greatly exceeds the number of students enrolled in colleges and universities,” the Dallas Express reported, summarizing a New York speech by Dr. Fritz Patrick, president of the American Institute of Homeopathy. Patrick urged schools to test young students for signs of insanity and
to segregate those with signs of mental illness in institutions in order to prevent their reproduction.

Meanwhile, anxiety over black fertility became apparent in the pages of *The Dallas Express* in the early 1920s. African Americans shrank sharply as a percentage of the state population, from 20.4 percent of the total in 1900 to 15.9 percent in 1920, probably because of white and Latino/a migration into the state in those two decades. In an era of disenfranchisement, segregation, and lynchings in Texas, African Americans might have feared even greater political marginalization as their relative numbers in the state declined. Advertisements for doctors offering information on improving fertility filled the pages of the publication. One ad offered a free book by a "Dr. Burroughs, a graduate physician who has spent forty years treating women for diseases peculiar to their sex and in his book explains why so many married women have been denied the blessing of children – why they are broken down physically in early life." Another advertisement offered information on the fertility treatment "Steritone." The manufacturers insisted that, "Every woman who wants to live a normal happy home life with little ones around her should consider it her first duty to find out what Steritone is ..."

Even before the NAACP promoted similar events, *The Dallas Express* started holding “Better Baby” contests “[i]n the interest of better bred and cared for Negro babies in Dallas ...” In a contest the newspaper sponsored at the Pythian Temple from July 1-3, “a special corps of physicians and trained nurses will examine, weigh, and give instructions to mothers on the care and feeding of their babies.” Mothers of “the healthiest, best developed babies” won prizes.

Some African American intellectuals in Texas, however, were concerned about which African Americans bore children, believing as did Du Bois in the early twentieth century that “among human races and groups, as among vegetables, quality and not mere quantity counts.” Assimilationist eugenics and anxieties about the worth of and dangers posed by the underclass appear in the writings of two early twentieth-century African American writers from Texas, Sutton R. Griggs and Lillian B. Jones Horace.

A novelist, author, political polemicist, and preacher born on Juneteenth, 1872 in Chatfield, Texas and educated at Bishop College in Marshall, Griggs founded the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee, and served as the school’s first
president from 1925-1926. Griggs began his political life as an advocate of black separatism, articulated in his 1899 novel *Imperium in Imperio: A Study of the Negro Race*. In the novel, a secret African American society seeks to create an independent black republic within the boundaries of the current United States. Griggs gradually transformed into a Booker T. Washington-style accommodationist who accepted segregation as a means to convince whites to accept and support black economic progress. Though he spent little time in Texas during his prolific writing career, his ideas reflected attitudes held by some African American elites in the state during the early twentieth century.

Horace, born Lillian Bertha “Amshead” or “Armistead” on April 29, 1880, was a native of Jefferson but she grew up in Fort Worth which, as one biographer notes, she considered her hometown. An educator, like Griggs she attended Bishop College, in her case from 1898-1899. She also attended Prairie View Normal and Industrial College in the 1920s. She authored a black separatist novel of her own, *Five Generations Hence*, which she self-published in 1916. Much later, she penned a never-published novel, *Angie Brown*. Both of Horace’s novels share the theme that black racial uplift could be achieved via education and economic independence from the outside white world. However, Karen Kossie-Chernyshev (the scholar who rediscovered the once-forgotten Horace and brought her literary career to light for modern audiences) noted that Horace tended to undermine “her commitment to uplift by focusing on black pathology.”

Independent, thoughtful, and creative, both Griggs and Horace suffered at the hands of what the historian Carter G. Woodson once famously characterized in 1933 as the “miseducation of the Negro” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Woodson noted, black students suffered not only because of the segregated, underfunded, overcrowded, and poorly equipped nature of the public schools African Americans attended. Woodson also identified crippling problems with the curricula offered black students of the era. As Woodson pointed out, “the philosophy and ethics resulting from our education system have justified slavery, peonage, segregation, and lynching. The oppressor has the right to exploit, to handicap. Negroes daily educated in the tenets of such a religion of the strong have accepted the status of the weak as divinely ordained, and during the last three generations of their nominal freedom, they have done
Woodson charged that American schools pushed African Americans into admiration of Western civilization while they were only rarely taught anything about African civilization or anything positive about African American history. Thus African Americans, like their lighter-skinned peers, were taught that only white people created technology and worthwhile culture and that blacks were at best apprentices at the feet of their smarter, more creative white superiors.

Such attitudes appear in both Horace's and Griggs' works. In *Five Generations Hence*, a prophetic dream startles the main character, Grace Noble. She foresees a nation in Africa founded by black immigrants from the United States, thriving and rising in greatness in the time span referenced. Throughout Horace's novel, black characters refer to the homeland as "darkest Africa," and fear that an African American missionary travelling there will be eaten, tortured by the natives, or die of some terrible disease. Africans are portrayed as ignorant and pre-modern. The novel assumes that blacks educated in the United States who immigrate to the African homeland will quickly assume leadership over natives. While Europeans were inventing the technology and culture that would conquer the world, Horace's character Noble believes, Africans continued to live in the Stone Age. Griggs, meanwhile, referred to one of his grandfathers, born in Africa, as a "savage."

Horace's and Griggs' skepticism about their African ancestors no doubt contributed to their doubts about the African American masses and their ability to govern themselves. At one point in *Five Generations Hence*, Horace's hero Grace Noble despairs as she contemplates the children she is teaching and sees in them the massive deficits she is convinced her people suffer. Reflecting on the state of black America, Noble "in her imagination saw an appalling, seething mass of millions of human forms groping in ignorance and superstition . . . Ignorance! most direful ignorance! intrepid monster! stalked a horrible reality among her people, and what was dismaying, his presence failed to intimidate the obstreperous rabble." Such a rabble would clearly have to be guided to a better life in Africa by thought leaders such as Noble and, once in their new African republic, the transported black masses might have to accept continued guidance by the intellectual elites. The revolution, in Horace's imagination, would be led from the top down, not the bottom up.
The black separatism Horace endorsed in *Five Generations Hence* and Griggs in *Imperium in Imperio* was, by definition, partly a eugenist enterprise, providing not only an escape from white economic and political exploitation, but also sexual boundaries that would shield African American women from sexual pollution by the white criminal element. Poor whites — Dahney’s undermen — cast a villainous shadow in both writers’ works. In Horace’s unpublished 1948 novel, *Angie Brown*, a friend warns the title character about a sinister poor white neighbor. “. . . Been free all they life and ain’t got nothing. That’s the kind that hates you and me. They scared we’ll get what they want. Rich folks whole lots easier to get along with; they don’t mind us; we ain’t in they way. They so far ’bove us in having things they ain’t scared of us . . . but these poor ones can’t ever forgive us for being free. They got to beat us back out o’ the way.”

Griggs did not accept that poor white undermen had a monopoly on racial ill will and violence, or that rich whites were too disinterested in African Americans to be poisoned with racism. “We find three general categories of racists in Griggs’s fiction,” Griggs biographer Finnie Coleman observes. “[M]aniacal scientists or social theorists; hardheaded poor Whites; and the arrogant aristocrat . . . Of the three types, the arrogant aristocratic racist takes center stage in Griggs’s fiction . . . It was important for Griggs to show that White supremacy was not the province of any particular class of Whites or a function of education or political affiliation. White supremacy was not restricted to gender, nor was religion a factor.”

One of the more ominous white racists created by Griggs in any of his novels is essentially a mad scientist, a white eugenicist named Dr. Zackland who, in *Imperium in Imperio*, spies a brilliant African American, Belton Piedmont, at a train station and decides that he must study the body of the black man — “a fine specimen of physical manhood” with “limbs . . . well formed and proportioned and . . . as strong as oak.” Zackland decides he can learn the most from this specimen by dissecting him, and he hopes to present parts of Belton to his medical colleagues as part of a lecture. Belton later survives a lynching attempt and Zackland, unaware that his victim is still alive, seizes his body. Belton awakens on the dissection table and overpowers Zackland, fatally stabbing him and making an escape.

In spite of this gruesome depiction of white racial science, Griggs accepts many premises of eugenicism. If he rejects white suprem-
acy, he still views many of the poor as dysgenic and wants the African American community to pursue assimilationist eugenics. Griggs' novels featured some characters who advocated various schemes of selective breeding, some calling for interracial breeding as a means of eliminating prejudice. Other Griggs characters, such as Letitia Gilbreath, a character in his last novel, Pointing the Way, encourage all African Americans to bear children with lighter skinned blacks in the hope of lightening the race. Gilbreath hopes this will reduce white prejudice. Griggs did not accept such ideas, but that does not mean he was not deeply concerned about both the black and white unfit.

He specifically rejected crossing the color line sexually. If he was less specifically concerned about color, he did advocate selective breeding for ability, believing that the path to a better future lay in the "better element" of the white population and "worthy" Negroes bearing larger families than the violent, lazy, immoral, and unintelligent of both races. He also seems to have supported the idea of restricting voting to the fit of both races. Griggs' novel Pointing the Way depicts a white politician, Seth Molair, the mayor of the fictional town of Belrose, getting converted to the cause of dropping voting restrictions aimed at African Americans by the argument that it's a racial insult to set a higher standard for blacks than for whites. Unqualified whites, including many in the lower class, should perhaps be disenfranchised, Griggs suggests. The novel argues that the way forward to a better tomorrow is for quality whites and blacks to make common cause against the unruly lower sorts. As critic Kenneth Warren suggests, Griggs seems to be arguing for an "interracial alliance of the better classes by making dead certain that there will be no challenge from below."

A cross-racial alliance of the better sort of white and black elites united in keeping the unruly masses under control did not evolve as Griggs hoped. The iron grip white elites in Texas held over ballot access eased after 1940 due to the African American and Latino/a civil rights movement and increasing pressure from the White House, the Congress, and the United States Supreme Court. Nevertheless, the anti-democratic discourse of the early twentieth century continued to shape Texas attitudes toward government and voting rights well into the twentieth century. Racism and eugenics stand as inherently anti-democratic concepts. Both imply that not all are fit for full participation in civic society, and that some are fitted for leadership by birth.
Both hold that societies are built not on shared values, but on shared blood. Such ideas reinforced a Texas commitment to limit voting to the fit long after eugenics came to be seen as toxic pseudo-science.

To this day, the Texas legislature has fought to limit voting rights. In 1944, the United States Supreme Court finally killed the so-called “white primary” for good, but a group of all-white party insiders still largely determined who won the Democratic Party nominations for public office. These primaries remained the only elections that mattered, for the most part, until the 1980s. In 1963, Texas voters turned down a state constitutional amendment that would have eliminated the poll tax, the electorate preferring to pay to cast their ballots rather than hand political power to supposedly unfit people of color. Elimination of the poll tax came only through outside force, in the form of an amendment to the United States Constitution in 1964. Texas resisted, claiming its poll tax did not violate the newly-ratified 24th Amendment, until the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the state levy in 1966. The Legislature responded that year with an onerous voter registration law that required reregistration annually, a requirement the high court did not throw out until 1971. From the 1970s, the state Legislature incessantly drew discriminatory state House and Senate as well as Congressional districts to suppress the voting strength of black and brown voters and to guarantee political victories for the ruling party, creating mostly pre-determined general election results that depress voter turnout. Finally, in 2011 the state passed one of the most restrictive voter identification laws in the country, requiring voters to present photo IDs such as a Texas driver’s license, a U.S. passport, a military identification card or an election identification certificate in order to cast a ballot. Obtaining these IDs cost money, and critics charge they represent a new form of poll tax, address a problem that virtually doesn’t exist (in-person voter fraud) and are designed to suppress voting by the poor and people of color. Implementation of the law has been repeatedly halted by federal courts.

Meanwhile, openly anti-democratic discourse can still be heard in Texas. In the 1960s, Dallas oil billionaire H.L. Hunt personally bankrolled a right-wing radio program, LIFELINE, hosted by former FBI agent Dan Smoot who once angered his patron by claiming in a broadcast that democracy was “a political outgrowth of the teachings of Jesus Christ.” Hunt angrily confronted Smoot after the
show, insisted that democracy was Satan's handiwork and a "phony liberal form of watered down communism." Such attitudes did not disappear with the passage of time. A group that Hunt supported, the obsessively anti-communist John Birch Society, has experienced a recent growth in membership and presents lectures across the state that insist the United States is a "republic, not a democracy," as if a republican form of government intrinsically could not reflect democratic values. These ideas are not at the fringe. Former Texas representative and erstwhile repeated Libertarian and Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul wrote in 2012, "Democracy is majority rule at the expense of the minority. Our system has certain democratic elements, but the founders never mentioned democracy in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, or the Declaration of Independence. In fact, our most important protections are decidedly undemocratic." Texas Republican Rep. Louie Gohmert of Tyler has even argued for a repeal of the 17th Amendment that gave voters the power to directly vote for their U.S. senators instead of having them appointed by state legislatures. Gohmert claimed in 2010 that the amendment ratified in 1913 constituted a violation of "states' rights."

More than a century of anti-democratic discourse appears to have had its intended effect. In 2008, the year of the presidential race between Democratic nominee Barack Obama and Republican John McCain, the voter turnout nationally was the highest in 40 years, but in Texas the turnout declined by one percent, from 57 percent in 2004 to 56 percent. In 2012, another presidential election year, Texas had the fifth-lowest turnout in the nation. Turnout in Texas during off-year elections is even more dreadful. Only 34.6 percent of eligible voters turned out to cast ballots in the November 2014 Congressional, state, and local elections. Texas ranked third-worst in voter turnout in the general election in 2016, with only 52 percent showing up on Election Day, even though nationally the turnout was the highest since 18-year-olds got the vote in time for the 1972 presidential election. Experts offer numerous explanations for why so few Texans exercise their right to vote. Voters there are disenchanted with both political parties. Heavy gerrymandering by Republicans, who have monopolized statewide office and held large majorities in the Legislature since 1995, has essentially predetermined the outcome of legislative and Congressional races in the state. No Democratic presidential candidate has carried the state since Jimmy Carter won there
in 1976. Meanwhile, Texas has not implemented reforms common in states with the highest voter turnouts, such as vote-by-mail advance ballots, and same-day or automatic voter registration and has, in fact, gone in the opposite direction with its voter ID law. In a 2015 study conducted by Rice University researchers examining voting patterns in Texas’ 23rd Congressional District, almost 19 percent of Hispanic non-voters said that concerns that they lacked proper identification led them to not show up on Election Day. Texas is not governed by a biological aristocracy dreamed of by men like Robert and Meriwether Lewis Dabney or Julian Huxley. Yet even without the sterilization laws these eugenicists advocated, the state has not fallen to so-called “Red Republicanism.” Nevertheless, fear of rule by the underman remains a potent force in Texas politics.

Notes


5 Robert Lewis Dabney, *A Defence*, 131, 154, 166.

6 Meriwether Lewis Dabney, *A Memoir and Letters*, ix, 12, 16-17, 22-24, 196.

7 Ibid., 194.

8 Ibid., 195-196.

9 Ibid., 88.

10 Ibid., 38.


in 1926, and Cesar Lombardi, president of the A.H. Belo Corporation, parent company of the newspaper, established the Dallas Critic Club in 1908 to provide a private setting for key leaders in the city to discuss not just local issues but controversies facing the country and the world. See Michael V. Hazel, “The Critic Club: Sixty Years of Quiet Leadership,” *Legacies: A History Journal for Dallas and North Central Texas*, II, no. 2 (Fall 1990), 9-17.


17 Ibid., 214-215.


23 Dabney, Memoir, 228.


25 Dabney, Memoir, 97.

26 Ibid., 177.

27 Ibid., 148.

28 Ibid., 212.

29 Ibid., 97-8.

30 Ibid., 215.
31 Ibid., 215-217.

32 Ibid., 218.

33 Ibid., 220-221.

34 Ibid., 217.


36 Ibid., 269.

37 Davidson, Race and Class in Texas Politics, 21-23.


41 Smallwood, et. al, New Biology (1934), 394.

42 Truman Jesse Moon, Biology for Beginners (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 315, 339. The Dallas Independent School District Board of Trustees adopted the Moon text on March 10, 1942. See the DISD board minutes, Volume 28, 93.


44 Adams and Vannest, The Record of America, 702.

45 James Harvey Robinson and Emma Peters Smith with James Breasted, Our World Today and Yesterday: A History of Modern Civilization (Dallas: Ginn and Company, 1924), 620. This text was approved by the Dallas Independent School Board on May 20, 1930. See the DISD board minutes, Volume 20, 50.

46 C. Kenneth Waters and Albert Van Helden, "Preface" in Waters and Helden, Julian
Huxley: Biologist and Statesman of Science (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992), v;


48 Kevles, In the Name of Eugenics, 61-62.


52 “Guinea Pigs Used in Fitter Families Contest at Fair,” Dallas Morning News, October 14, 1925, 10.


54 “State Fair Shows: Something About Attractions to be Seen on Amusement Row This Year,” Dallas Morning News, August 18, 1907, 4.


“Passing for White,” Dallas Express, April 18, 1925, 4.

“Not So Complimentary To the Nordics,” Dallas Express, March 21, 1925, 4.

“Scientist Says Negroes Completed Dead Gas Tests,” Dallas Express, April 18, 1925, 1.

Ibid.

“White Moron Admirs Assault on Little Negro Girl,” Dallas Express, October 3, 1925, 1; For more on Henry Goddard’s role in creating modern intelligence tests and his support for the eugenics movement, see Leila Zunderland, Measuring Minds: Henry

69 “More Lunatics Than Students,” Dallas Express, October 31, 1925, 1.


71 From 1882-1930, Texas ranked third nationally in the number of lynchings behind only Mississippi and Georgia. Texas lynching mobs murdered 492 Texans including 143 whites and 349 blacks. See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women’s Campaign Against Lynching (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 134-135.

72 “A Baby in Your Arms,” and “Childless Marriages Explained,” advertisement, Dallas Express, January 10, 1925, 5.


74 Michael Dorr and Angela Logan, “Quality, Not Mere Quantity, Counts,” 76.


The entire text of Jones’ novel is included in Karen Kossie-Chernyshev’s *Recovering Five Generations Hence*, 17-96.


Warren, “Perfecting the Political Romance,” 279.


An 1821 Trip Down Trammel's Trace

BY GARY L. PINKERTON

There had never been a road prepared
that a wheeled conveyance could pass
from one section to the other.
R.L. Jones

Trammel's Trace was the first road from the states and territories to the north of Spanish Texas in the early 1800s. Trammel's Trace from the north and the El Camino Real de los Tejas from the east were the earliest two routes into the Nacogdoches District of Spanish Texas from the United States.

The earliest evidence of the origins of Trammel's Trace appeared on maps from the early 1800s. A map drawn in 1807 by a Spanish priest named Puelles showed a road almost due south to Nacogdoches from a point on the Red River. Not long before the creation of this map, hundreds of Spanish soldiers marched to the Red River from Nacogdoches to intercept an American expedition exploring the boundary between Spain and the United States in 1803.

Following trails through the forests and prairies, the soldiers left behind a scarred landscape clearly visible to others. Men who captured mustangs in the prairies south of the Red River later used that soldiers' trail. Anglo immigrants also used parts of that route to migrate into Texas many years later.

Spanish Texas became Mexican Texas in 1821, and the liberalization of colonization laws resulted in Anglos migrating in growing numbers. People from Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri Territory, and the Carolinas came down Trammel's Trace from both of its origins at separate

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points on the Red River—-one at Fulton, Arkansas at the Great Bend of the Red River, and a second point from settlements at Pecan Point and Jonesborough farther west up the Red River along what would become the border between Texas and Oklahoma.

Though the earliest maps did not name the trails across northeastern Texas, their track matches later maps which attached the name Trammel's Trace. The earliest mention of Trammel's Trace by name was in a letter dated June 1821 when an early Red River settler referred to the “old Trammel trace.” Subsequently, Trammel's Trace was firmly entrenched in the cartographic history of the developing region. When the Texas Republic began making grants of land in 1838, surveyors noted the crossing of Trammel's Trace through many of the original Texas headright grants in seven counties. Commissioners forming the boundaries of Rusk County, Texas, in 1843 designated Trammel's Trace as two-thirds of the line between Rusk and Panola counties. Even into the mid-1860's, Civil War cartographers identified Trammel's Trace amidst a growing network of roads crisscrossing the region. In places where later roads followed on or near the original path of Trammel's Trace, evidence of the old road remains today in the form of overgrown ruts through forests or across cleared pasture land.

**A Journey down Trammel's Trace**

Descriptions of Trammel's Trace and the terrain it crossed emerged from the letters and diaries of early settlers and travelers, official reports by envoys of Spain, Mexico, and the United States, and the daily logs of soldiers patrolling the edges of the frontier. To get to the northern border between the United States and Mexico in the early 1820’s, immigrants first had to cross Arkansas Territory. The road across Arkansas cut diagonally from northeast to southwest, following a geologic boundary between the hills to the north and west and the plains to the southeast. Though the United States military had improved the trail, increasingly frequent use left it rutted and rough and forced wagons and horses around the remains of stumps eight inches or more above ground. In one section of the fearsome Mississippi Swamp in eastern Arkansas, only about five miles of high ground was found in ninety miles of river bottom.

No matter what difficulties they encountered crossing Arkansas, a traveler’s journey from the Red River down Trammel's Trace was unlike any other leg of the trip. Stepping onto Trammel’s Trace meant
stepping onto a path that crossed through unsettled lands in a foreign country. At the pace of a loaded wagon the trip from Fulton to Nacogdoches took roughly two and a half weeks. Two and a half weeks of forests, two and a half weeks of worry over attack by Indians, two and a half weeks when not a soul might be seen.

The day by day account that follows is based on both the geography of the route of Trammel's Trace and accounts from the period about their means of travel. With a loaded wagon, fifteen miles a day was making rapid headway. That measure, as well as the geography, is used to present an account that not only identifies the physical difficulties presented by the terrain but a sense of the feelings travelers of that time were likely to experience.

Day 1: Leaving the United States

The trip down Trammel's Trace began with fear and anticipation—a fear of the unknown and anticipation of the opportunity for hundreds of acres of land and a fresh start. The transition to the uncertain eastern boundary of Mexican Texas began fourteen miles northeast of the Red River at the crossroads in Washington, Arkansas. There travelers learned there were two primary routes into Texas. Trammel's Trace crossed the Red River directly into what is now northeast Texas by way of Fulton, Arkansas. Earlier travelers continued farther west up the Red River to use the Trammel's Trace branch from Jonesboro and Pecan Point. That road had been only recently cleared for use by wagons. The second major route to Texas followed the east side of the Red River to Natchitoches, Louisiana. The advantage of that route was that it remained in the territory of the United States. By comparison, Trammel's Trace was reported to have better access to water and to be a faster journey.

Traders and immigrants used cowhide packsaddles to carry their belongings well before the Trace was cleared for wagons. As long as the space between a horse's legs, the pack was strapped across its girth. These Mexican-style packs, called sillajes, were large enough to carry one of the most prized possessions on the frontier—a valued feather bed.

Fulton, at the Red River, is fourteen miles southwest of Washington, Arkansas, near enough to make the trip in one day of travel. The trail from Washington to Fulton came down the southwest face of the foothills. Just above a bluff along the river, the single trail split into a
series of small traces. Each trace led to separate campsites and river crossings where various tribes and traders dispersed to avoid encroaching on each other. A sunset camp on the high banks of the Red River at Fulton was the reward for those who pulled out of Washington at first light. At the end of a long day, travelers could stand on a bluff overlooking their next obstacle, the crossing of the Red River. They were about to traverse 180 miles of uninhabited, foreign country before emerging in Nacogdoches. A good night’s sleep in the relative safety of the United States was a comfort that would soon end.

Day 2: Crossing the Red

Riverbanks are designated as right or left from the perspective of a boatman facing downstream. Fulton, the oldest settlement in southwestern Arkansas, was founded on the left bank of the Red River where the water slowly eroded the hillside in a grand turn from an easterly course to almost due south – the Great Bend. When the sun rose behind the last campsite in the United States at Fulton, it illuminated a sought-after destination on the other side of the river. Sounds of the morning coming to life eased minds otherwise occupied by the difficulties of the journey they were about to undertake. There were no inhabitants along the way who might offer safe respite for a night. The only grain their horses would have was what they could carry. The likelihood of danger and adversity was common knowledge.

Crossing the Red River could be simple or treacherous. Natural crossings built up in shoals where smaller streams entered the flow of a larger river. A mile or so upstream from Fulton, where the Little River merged its waters with the Red, sand bars and islands of debris created a ford that for much of the year was the easiest way across. Animals found the most favorable fords. Their historic paths were the best guides to suitable crossings. Just downstream of the bluff at Fulton, signs of horse’s hooves angling down the bank to the water’s edge indicated a manageable crossing. Even if the water level appeared passable, thorough reconnoiters were needed before making a choice about where to cross the ever-changing river. If the water was running swiftly from heavy rains, the boiling waters of the Red were tinted with the color of the clay soil through which they flowed. A darkened swirl two hundred yards across convinced the sensible to wait until water levels receded.

A passage without wagons made the crossing easier. Packs were piled atop the tallest horse to prevent them from getting wet, or towed
across on a small log raft built only for that purpose. A raft built by an earlier party could be reused, but only after it was retrieved from the other side of the river. If the water level was low, a wagon might still be pulled across by the horses. A passage with a wagon increased the danger and difficulty and put more belongings at risk. There was always a danger that the current might push against the side boards or sweep over the top, swamping the wagon and pulling the horses under the current. Carts and mules had been lost in similar circumstances, even when the flow did not seem that strong. Eddies and currents caused the sandy bottom to shift underneath the horses' feet, and the force of the flow could overcome a horse or topple a wagon. Only the inexperienced or foolhardy made a treacherous crossing with a wagon loaded with their only possessions. To get flour wet this early in the trip down the emptiness of Trammel's Trace would be unfortunate. To get gunpowder wet would be a disaster.

If the water was deeper, wagon boxes were raised by placing logs between the bottom and the running gear to gain a foot or so of height. If the water was too deep for the wagon to be pulled across at all, the wheels were removed and trees felled to build a log raft to carry it across. Traveling in a group made many things easier. With enough men, wagons that had been tarred and sealed, helping them to float, could be pulled across with a rope made from hide.

Safe arrival on the other side did not mean the dangers were over. What looked like a wide beach on the other side of the Red could in fact be a deep bog that shook with every step. After piercing the thin, drying crust, horses sank deeper into the muck, struggling to keep their footing. The soggy mud in the bottomland on the other side sucked the energy from the horse's legs and clung to wagon wheels like tar. The driver, muddy to his thighs, coaxed and pulled and hollered the horses across with the reins in one hand and a piece of switch cane in the other. Animals, property, and people were soaked and covered in dried dirt after several trips back to recover supplies from the other side of the river. A crossing like this could take hours for a large group to travel only two hundred yards, consuming the better part of a day and making little forward progress.

Not far from the riverbank on the other side was a well-used camp for weary travelers, a minor reward for the crossing. Signs of cook fires a few days prior left their mark under the branches of an old weathered oak. Past the campsite, the path of Trammel's Trace quickly left
the relative openness of the riverbank and entered a canebrake which covered miles of the route. The sky above the trail to Texas was about to disappear.

**Day 3 - Breaking the Cane**

Cartographers who mapped the area around Fulton during the Civil War labeled Trammel’s Trace on the Texas side of the Red River with a simple one-word testament describing conditions on the trail — “impracticable.” After the challenges of the trail across Arkansas, it was hard to imagine the road getting worse, but that was likely. The road across Arkansas was rough, but still showed signs of a modest effort at improvement by the military and by settlers anxious to bring trade past their door. Trammel’s Trace looked more like it had only just been beaten through the woods. The entire route showed signs it had not been long since it was simply a trail for smugglers. Those signs were found in the thick canebrakes on the Texas side of the Red River.

Cane twenty to thirty feet tall and an inch or more in diameter grew so thick that a man on foot had to weave his way like a tick crawling through the hairs on the back of an old hound. Seven miles of canebrake stood in the way, a canopy so thick the sun could not penetrate for four months of the year. When cane was flattened, or cut for a passage, the tall, leafy tops on the remaining sides curved inward toward the center and formed a darkened archway. This tunnel of cane was beaten down only by the regularity of travel.

In other sections, hardwoods that survived the regular inundations in the broad flood plain of the Red River allowed tall shoots of cane to grow underneath. Clearing the canebrakes, passing Lake Comfort, and crossing McKinney Bayou, Trammel’s Trace slowly angled southwesterly toward a long bluff overlooking the rich river bottom to the north. The slight elevation along the edge of the flood plain brought a refreshing breeze and a glimpse of the land spoken of so highly by others. The border between the United States and Mexico was still uncertain in this part of the country, but at this point travelers understood they were entering a foreign land as the sun set on their third day down Trammel’s Trace.

**Day 4: The Sulphur Prairies**

Meager supplies of coffee were carefully hoarded, but what better occasion to enjoy it than waking to the first dawn in a new country?
For the first time, the travelers beheld prairies bordering the Sulphur Fork of the Red River in a country that had been described as beautiful and undulating, equal parts of open grassland and wooded forests over low, rolling hills.

The westerly course of the Trace followed a ridge at the edge of the Red River bottom. Years later, the same land became part of the old Sugar Hill Plantation and is now a combination of farm houses and subdivisions northeast of Texarkana, Texas. The high ground gave relief from the flood plains below, and still provides an expansive hilltop view. A few more miles west, the path of the Trace crossed what is now the Arkansas-Texas state line about two miles north of Interstate 30 on State Line Avenue. When the survey of the eastern boundary between the Republic of Texas and the United States was completed in 1841, members of the crew built an eight-foot tall mound of dirt every mile along the line. Survey notes identified Trammel's Trace crossing between border mound markers 102 and 103, intersecting another road from the broad river bottoms to the east and the Red River south of Fulton.

Beyond the ridge along the flood plain, Trammel's Trace turned to the southwest where legend says smugglers kept a hidden stockade for stolen horses. What is now Bowie County, Texas, was a mix of intermittent grassland and hardwood forest. Wild horses often moved down from the northern plains into these prairies. The sounds of nearby mustangs attracted packhorses to escape their domestic confines. The gentlest wagon horse, once among a free-running herd, quickly acquired all the intractable wildness of his untamed companions. The result of such an encounter could be a bolting horse, nostrils flaring with the scent of freedom.

Day 5: Creek Crossings

The ease of the trail through the prairies ended too quickly. Early in this day's journey it was evident that a bluff on Nettles Creek was a transition point to a different kind of terrain. The trail headed downhill toward another water crossing, several of them, in fact. The East Fork, Nettles Creek, and Conn Creek had to be crossed in a distance less than three miles. Hardwood forests of oak, ash, and cedar tangled with vines lined the edges of the creeks. Small streams this close together resulted in a continuous, thick undergrowth, making travel more difficult.

Detours that formed around low, rutted spots in the trail took on
the characteristics of side trails. Over time, some of those side trails replaced sections of the Trace and became the main path. Multiple and parallel tracks spread out across the terrain in places where wet or rutted trails made for rough going. Weaving its way from one high spot to the next, there were still sloughs in this bottomland the trail could not avoid. Horses constantly sinking into the mud in this kind of terrain required wagon passengers to climb down and coax them through. Pulling on the horses and pushing the wagon wheels through the muddy bottoms resulted in slow progress. Even if a spot of dry ground to catch one’s breath could be found, enduring the nasty biting insects made every stop painful and miserable. At least the clouds of black flies did not follow from the woods to the more open ground. When black flies swarmed the horses, they left a drop of blood at every spot they touched.

The trail turned more to the south as it approached Caney Creek and Big Creek, separated by only about a mile and a half. It might take an entire day for travelers to slog through these creek bottoms. Relatively dry weather made travel easier than after an accumulation of rainfall. Wooded creek bottoms and bay galls (forested wetlands in a depression) did not dry out quickly, making for muddy going even without any recent rain. The land rose and leveled out again about a mile and a half past Big Creek. Back on the edge of a small prairie, the trail emerged from the deep woods where the clouds of mosquitoes relented for a change.

**Day 6: Crossing the Sulphur River**

Travel the next morning was easier, but only for a few miles. The dark mud from the sloughs dried and began to fall from the bottom of the wagon. The woods opened into scattered prairies edged by mature hardwoods and pines. The ease did not continue, however, and the forest trail became thicker and more confined as the travelers entered yet another hardwood bottom. Traveling through similar country, one observer noted that when “the country began to descend a change soon took place in the aspect of nature, and of everything around us.”

Tracks of horses and wagon wheels from earlier crossings were filled with a watery muck. The trail wound around haphazardly in the muddy sections, making way toward any higher patch of ground or spaces between trees wide enough to let pack horses or wagons through. Danger was camouflaged and hidden in the little oases of
land. One diarist chronicled the difficulties this way.

The unfortunate traveler has but little chance of escaping with life, if, from want of experience, he is fooundered in the swampy cane-brakes. When the horse sinks and the rider leaves the saddle, the only thing he can do is to return back upon his track; but let him beware of these solitary small patches of briars, generally three or four yards in circumference, which are spread here and there on the edges of the cane-brakes, for there he will meet with deadly reptiles and snakes unknown in the prairies; such as the grey-ringed water moccasin, the brown viper, the black congo with red head and the copper head, all of whom congregate and it may be said make their nests in these little dry oases, and their bite is followed by instantaneous death.

The approach to woodland rivers like the Sulphur was across boggy, miry, nasty ground. Horses tired quickly in this kind of terrain and required time to recover and rest. The left bank of the Sulphur River finally appeared, and was the first river crossing encountered since the trip down Trammel's Trace started at the Red River. The trail led to a low bluff with a steep incline down to the river. The river was no more than fifty feet across, but the banks dropped off quickly, making the crossing more difficult. For two miles on the west side of the Sulphur River crossing, the flood plain was as flat as the bottom of an iron skillet, with virtually no change in elevation or the unrelenting density of the forest.

The Trammel's Trace crossing of the Sulphur was one of the most significant natural landmarks in the area. Anderson's Creek entered the Sulphur Fork a quarter-mile above the crossing and deposited a shoal of silt and debris that created a convenient ford. Moscoso crossed here twice in 1542, and La Salle's surviving crew in 1687. In 1821 when immigrant traffic increased, there was no ferry to take travelers across the Sulphur. If they were lucky, there were the remains of some earlier crafted log rafts or pirogues lashed to a tree on the bank of the river, or pushed to higher ground by the last flood.

It was not until 1837 that Mark Epperson operated Epperson's Ferry at this crossing and it became a mail stop on one of the Texas Re-
public's early postal routes.

The trail emerged on the other side of the Sulphur River bottom on high ground between where Thomas Creek and Whatley Creek emptied into the river. The sharp rise of the trail to a bluff signaled an end to their present difficulties. Another long day of hard work through muddy ground and an arduous river crossing was complete. The next few days of travel beyond the Sulphur River offered a more relaxing journey with easier creek crossings. Thoughts of less arduous travels to come could now supersede the difficulties of the present journey. There was time for looking ahead, but not for a good night's sleep. The insects did not allow it.

**Day 7: A Historic Fork in the Road**

When rain clouds covered the sun in the early part of the day, weary travelers got a few more minutes of sleep before the sounds of thunder off to the northwest jolted them to attention. The scent of rain and a stillness in the air alerted them to prepare for a day of wet travel. If rain continued until their next river crossing, they could only persevere or wait for the water to subside.

Anyone traveling on Highway 77 near Dalton Cemetery and who knows where to look for the historical marker can still see ruts across what is now only a pasture. Another mile to the southwest and travelers came to a historic fork in Trammel's Trace. A trail from the north joined the main track from Fulton and continued southward. This northern branch of Trammel's Trace connected the early Red River settlements of Jonesborough and Pecan Point to the main trail to Nacogdoches. The route between this fork and the Red River was later called the Spanish Trace. Northwest of this fork, the trail to Pecan Point crossed the Sulphur River at what became known as Stephenson's Ferry, about one and a half miles upstream from where the Sulphur River crosses Highway 67 in the northwestern corner of what is now Cass County. The section of Trammel's Trace from Pecan Point and Jonesboro was the entryway for many immigrants from Tennessee and Kentucky, some of whom became part of Stephen F. Austin's "Old Three Hundred" original settlers.

**Days 8-10: Turning South and East**

Inevitably, the rains came. Not in torrents, but in a steady, light rainfall that sent the wagon underneath a canopy of trees until prepa-
rations to get back on the trail for a rain-soaked ride were completed. The next few days' travel was much simpler than the last. The creek crossings to come were more easily managed, and the sandy soil in the forests allowed the rain to soak into the ground beneath. Though the terrain was easier, the environs were not.

Indians in the area assessed the settlers' interests in remaining in their territory by trading with them. Despite the general good will, immigrants new to the country could not help but wonder if the friendliness was merely a ruse before some horse thievery to be carried out during the night. The likelihood of a safe encounter and a little trade was not enough reassurance to dissuade the wary from paying closer attention to noises out of sight in these forests.

More certain than encounters with Indians, and perhaps more fearsome, was the frequency and predictably of stirring hornets and yellow jackets from their hiding places. The edges of creeks, the bottom side of fallen logs, and tree stumps held swarms of the menacing insects. If a horse was stung it would paw and kick the ground, then roll in the dirt to rid itself of the sting.

From the fork in the road that was the Trammel's Trace branch to Pecan Point, the trail ran almost due south for about fifteen miles. There it passed near the site of an old Choctaw Village, on the east side of present Hughes Springs. Near these settlements, a chalybeate spring filtered by iron ore reportedly had a healing effect on those who drank from the waters. Leaving the old Choctaw Village, the path of Trammel's Trace turned southeasterly in a long sweeping curve, after which it followed a relatively straight course for about twenty-five miles to the crossing of Big Cypress Bayou, near present day Jefferson.

In one account of a trip back up Trammel's Trace from Nacogdoches to Pecan Point in 1821, the traveler said the only people he saw on the entire journey of almost 200 miles were one small group of Delaware Indians. Caddo people built burial mounds in the area and would have left footpaths crossing the main trail. With signs of Indians about, even the sweet sound of a bird call brought a certain uneasiness about whether it was a bird, or the signal of warriors waiting to attack.

A bluff at the edge of the Big Cypress bottomlands offered a vantage point high above the trail ahead. It was clear there were few hills and little high ground for the next five miles. Halfway across the bottom, a single hill in the midst of the bottom was visible over the trees, another hundred feet higher than the bluff on which they stood. The
trail headed in that general direction and it was easy to see why. This change signaled their entrance into an unhealthy country of river bottoms and thick hardwood forests different than anything they had encountered to this point. The woods were darker and more ominous, the high ground less certain, and the still air filled with more of the biting insects that tormented both people and horses. Mosquito bites left faces swollen, and buffalo gnats could kill a horse. The curdling cry of a panther, the howl of wolves in the distance, or the low moan of bears huddled in the canebrakes sent chills down the spine of the hardiest traveler. The prairies were behind them now, and terrain of a different sort lay ahead.

Day 11-13: Cypress Bayous

The forests changed as the wagon headed down a slight incline into the expansive, wooded floodplain of the Big Cypress and Little Cypress Bayous. The air was still with little breeze, damp with the smell of rotting wood and wet earth. Magnificent cypress trees gave the forests a more ominous feel. The trail slogged across muddy sloughs from one dry stretch of ground to another for the next two miles. Fatigue wore down even the hardiest of animals and their wariness became more heightened as they grew tired. Broken tree limbs and brush offered telltale signs of the prior passage of a wagon or a horse carrying pack bags. Travelers occasionally rediscovered the ruts of a trail used by others, but their advance for now was based less on markers of those gone before than on their sense of direction. They headed toward a solitary piece of high ground in the middle of the creek bottom and hoped for a short respite there. Even with all its attendant obstacles, a crossing of the Big Cypress Bayou seemed routine at this point in the journey. They learned to look for logjams backfilling a sandy island that bisected a faster flowing channel. Travelers gathered up fallen logs and built upon the debris that was already there to construct an easier way to drive a wagon across a shallow ford.

The ground rose quickly out of the bottom not far beyond the Big Cypress Bayou. The change in elevation was so sudden that the trail curved around the rise to avoid the steepness of the grade. The top of the hill was almost two hundred feet above the swampy bayou behind them. From that vantage point they could see their bottomland excursion had only reached its mid-point. The same type of terrain was ahead of them at the crossing of Little Cypress Bayou. The trail fol-
allowed a slightly more elevated route through the bottom, and only the bayou crossing itself led to any difficulty. After another mile of travel, the trail finally emerged to higher ground out of the thick river bottom.

If providence and the trail builders were kind, a small clearing in the woods beyond the bottomland was available at about the same time weariness overcame tired bodies. Nightfall led to thoughts about how to respond if they spotted the last flames of a camp of Choctaw or Caddo sleeping near these same banks, or suspicious characters taking cover in a canebrake. Enduring nightfall without the benefit of a fire for cooking or for light may have been advisable to avoid detection, but the risk of attack by humans was less than the sure assault of bugs. Biting insects were so numerous that the sound of their swarming drowned out everything but the shriek of a bobcat. The smoke of a campfire stoked with sweet gum roots, called copal, was more valuable than any sense of security since it kept the bugs at bay. The insects were far more likely to draw blood than panthers or Indians.

As the trail left the Little Cypress bottom it wound up and down, from one small hill to the next, across narrow creeks for another full day of travel. The woods varied little and the clearings were fewer. There were clear tracks around the largest trees and through the most open ground available. Two days past the mud and mosquitoes of the Cypress, the trail descended into another flood plain. Past Caddo burial mounds and across creeks and hills, the trail finally came to the edge of the last river crossing before completing the journey to Nacogdoches. The muddy, brown waters of the Sabine River lay ahead.

Day 14 & 15: Boundaries in the Piney Woods
The banks of any river became gathering places when flood waters prevented a crossing. Men of many nations camped together in a tenuous traveler's truce, their horses tethered nearby to feed and rest. When the water level allowed, the low water crossing of Trammel's Trace over the Sabine was atop an outcropping of dark brown lignite. The coal shelf was about forty feet wide and about three feet above the flow on its downstream side, creating a small waterfall. The shallow depth of the water and the hard surface made wagon crossings much easier any time the water level allowed.

The path of Trammel's Trace angled steeply down the sandy bank of the Sabine River through the ruts left by previous crossings. At low water, the crossing of the Sabine River at this rocky ford offered few
challenges. The water was often only knee high at the edge of the coal shelf that formed the hard surface. The trail down to the river was steep and narrow, but once at the water's edge the crossing proceeded uneventfully if the Sabine was kind.

Upon emerging on the south side of the river there was more of the predictable slog through bottomland filled with hardwood and brush. Though it was low and muddy, compared to the Cypress Bayou lowlands it was not nearly as difficult or as foreboding. Oxbow lakes, cut off from the former flow of the river, appeared on both sides of the trail. On the south side of the river, pines were more predominant and the character of the forests began to change. There was even more evidence of one of the demons of the Trace, poison ivy, in places where the canopy opened to the sunlight. This poisonous plant grew widely as ground cover, plaguing travelers on foot who took to the trail in the wrong places. An itchy nuisance could become a serious infection without medicines or herbal remedies in harsh conditions unsuitable for cleanliness. Keen-eyed travelers with more experience also noticed specimens of a tree that was one of the primary commodities of the Indians. Wood from the Osage orange, or Bois-d'arc tree, was easily polished, hard, and durable, making it a prime source of wood to make hunting bows.

Day 16 & 17: One Ending is the Next Beginning

The last week of travel down Trammel’s Trace to Nacogdoches was through a virtually unbroken forest. Pine trees formed a dense crown overhead in the woods of eastern Texas. Short-leafed pine with a diameter of two to three feet dominated the landscape with a majestic evergreen shade growing upwards of 130 feet. Loblolly pines were even larger, if less abundant. It would not have been unusual to see a loblolly with a diameter of four feet or more chest-high from the ground. Trees like these were saplings over 200 years before Anglos used the trails which became Trammel’s Trace. Oaks like the chinquapin, red oak, white oak, and the basket oak with acorn caps bigger than a musket ball were prevalent in the creek bottoms. Elm, black walnut, hickory, cypress, sycamore, dogwood, and birch provided a more varied forest in the lowlands. Other than tree limbs which naturally fell from the lowest parts of the pines, some sections of the forest floor were as clear as if cared for by unseen inhabitants. The only undergrowth was grass or lacy green ferns that thrived in the filtered sunlight. The size
of the towering trees was a formidable deterrent for anyone who considered staking a land claim and building a cabin. Finding trees suitable for a cabin—small enough for a man to handle with only an axe—was difficult in some stretches.

From a point just twenty-six miles north of Nacogdoches the route of the old trail varied over time. Williams Settlement was a well-populated community of over twenty families on high ground above the East Fork of the Angelina River west of present day Mt. Enterprise. A road from there to Nacogdoches would have been established in the early days of the settlement for trade and business activity. Most likely, the road through Williams Settlement was Trammel’s Trace. Farther south and west of there on Dill Creek, just north of present day Cushing, Texas, the site of the Spanish Mission San Jose de los Nazonis was served by trails to nearby Indian settlements. The mission was established in 1716, one hundred years before the beginnings of Trammel's Trace. Spanish and French trade goods recovered during archeological studies of the mission site attest to early activity pre-dating the use of Trammel's Trace. Any remaining segments of pathways from the mission to Nacogdoches may have provided a part of the trail that became Trammel’s Trace.

Indications of the likely route of Trammel’s Trace between Williams Settlement and Nacogdoches also appear on a map for a land survey just south of the current boundary of Rusk and Nacogdoches counties. In the survey for Mariano Sanchez, a road from Pecan Point to Nacogdoches—Trammel’s Trace—tracked diagonally across the survey to the south-southeast, toward Nacogdoches from the direction of Williams Settlement. The plat map for the Luis Sanchez survey, angling off to the west of Trammel’s Trace, names a “road from the Saline to Pecan Point.” The “saline” was a salt deposit northwest of Nacogdoches that was a critical resource for the region. That road connected to the El Camino Real near the Trinity River, a key crossing.

The last stretch of Trammel’s Trace into Nacogdoches followed the eastern edge of La Banita Creek—a sandy trail along a beautiful creek. Signs of an approaching arrival in the only settlement in this part of Texas could be recognized in a slight widening of the road or by the presence of small cabins. Finally, Trammel’s Trace became El Calle del Norte (North Street) in Nacogdoches, and intersected the El Camino Real near the old stone building at the plaza. Nacogdoches was virtually empty after 1812, its inhabitants driven off by conflicts with the Span-
iards. After 1820, some of the early residents returned to their homes, bringing the population of the settlement back to over one hundred inhabitants. Nacogdoches and its trading partner, Natchitoches to the east in the United States, were both important to the history and commerce of the borderlands. Natchitoches was a river port and the outer reaches of United States influence. Nacogdoches was a way station on the El Camino Real which led westward to the new colonies in Texas.

The rigors of travel and the strain of uncertainty never diminished the dreams that kept immigrants moving forward into Texas following promises of land, riches, and opportunity. The trip from north to south on Trammel's Trace, from Fulton, Arkansas, all the way to Nacogdoches, Texas, took up almost three weeks of travel over 180 miles of raw, wagon-busting trail. Those who managed to keep their supplies and belongings dry past dozens of stream crossings and three rivers, and who avoided mortal injury, disease, or attack, at last reached their next waypoint in Nacogdoches.

As travelers emerged from the forest at the place where Trammel's Trace widened into something closer to a road, the need to be on guard did not disappear; it simply changed to an awareness of new dangers. Any traveler coming down the way of the smugglers might be suspected to be another one of the "bad men" from Pecan Point or smugglers the trail tended to bring south. Seeing someone emerge from the road's shadows on the way south gave the citizens of Nacogdoches cause to wonder what act of illegality was underway. That assessment was probably correct in the earliest days of the trail's use, before the wave of colonization and migration that started so fervently after Mexico took possession of the territory in 1821.

There were two jumping off points on the northern ends of Trammel's Trace heading to the new country to the south—Fulton and the route from Jonesborough and Pecan Point. On the southern end was Nacogdoches, the town that signaled it was time to turn west to a better life toward colonization in central Texas. In between were smugglers, thieves, Indians, and those men and women brave enough to endure those risks in order to start a new life in Texas. Those inhospitable wilds and unsettling times were the province of Trammel's Trace.
Notes

1 Source: Trammel's Trace: First Road to Texas from the North, Gary L. Pinkerton, Texas A&M University Press. (order information: www.tamupress.com or www.trammelstrace.com)


3 Fray Jose Maria de Jesus Puelles' Mapa Geographica de la Provincias Septentrionales de esta Nueva Espana of 1807 can be found in the Dolph Briscoe Center of the University of Texas in Austin. For more discussion of this trace to the Spanish Bluff see Dan Flores, Southern Counterpart to Lewis and Clark: The Freeman and Cusits Expedition of 1806. (Norman OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 191-192.

4 Though Jonesborough and Pecan Point are two distinct points on early maps, it was Pecan Point which was the earlier settlement and most often referenced by traders and Indian agents. When mentioning the access points from there to Trammel's Trace, I use them both together to indicate a focal terminus to what came to be called Trammel's Trace. When referencing activity in each locale, they will be noted separately where the documents indicate.

5 Jones, Autobiography, 323.

6 Library of Congress, Maps, American Memory. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/. The American Memory Project of the Library of Congress provides online access to several different maps of Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana that show trails which became part of Trammel's Trace. By the 1830's, more direct routes between settlements replaced the Trace as the primary route for routine.


See also Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, Or, The Journal of a Santa Fe Trader: During Eight Expeditions across the Great Western Prairies, and a Residence of Nearly Nine Years in Northern Mexico. (New York, H.G. Langley, 1844). This is an excellent resource on travel conditions in Texas during this time period.

See also Jack Jackson, ed., and John Wheat (translator). Texas by Teran: The Diary Kept By General Manuel de Mir y Terin On His 1828 Inspection of Texas. (Austin TX, University of Texas Press, 2000).

8 Southwest Trail. http://www.southwesttrail.com. This route from the northeastern corner of Arkansas to the southwestern corner at Fulton and the Great Bend of the Red River was often referred to as the Old Military Road or the National Road. In
this book, it will be called the Southwest Trail which is more presently used to name the collective group of trails and roads that roughly followed the edge of the Gulf Coastal Plain across Arkansas.

Larry Priest (ed) and Kathryn Priest. The Diary of Clinton Harrison Moore, http://www.pcf.org/genealogy/ClintonHarrisonMoore.html. The citation is for Moore's diary entry for March 18, 1839.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: A map of Trammel's Trace can be viewed or downloaded at www.trammelstrace.com. Where applicable, sources to support the following depictions of the terrain and difficulties of travel are cited. Del Weniger's landmark work, The Explorers Texas: The Land and Waters, provides many details for depictions of the route to follow. Since the route of Trammel's Trace has been generally established, information about the landscape can be described with relative accuracy. A mud hole is still a mud hole and a rattlesnake still fearsome. The author's wish is to convey some sense of the emotion of such a difficult journey and he requests of the reader the liberty to explore that without direct documentation.

Daniel Davis says Trammell was the first one to clear this route in about 1821.

This route to the El Camino Real afforded the relative safety of remaining inside the United States until reaching the Sabine River crossing at Gaines' Ferry. Trammel's Trace reportedly had better water resources.

James Dawson and Mary Eakin Dawson. Trammel's Trace. The Dawson's researched and mapped Trammel's Trace during the 1940's. A manuscript of their work, along with the definitive map of Trammel's Trace produced using survey information is found in the collection at the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives (SARA) in Washington, Arkansas. This reference is from their manuscript note 14, citing the Arkansas Gazette, Hempstead term of court, 1820.


George William Featherstonehaugh, Excursion through the slave states, from Washington on the Potomac, to the frontier of Mexico; with sketches of popular manners and geological notices. (New York, Harper, 1844), 124. Featherstonehaugh gave this 1834 account of a
crossing near the location of Dooley's Ferry, south of Fulton. Even with the benefit of a ferry, his crossing into what the ferryman called “Spain” (it was Mexico at the time) was treacherous.

18 “Vicinity of Fulton, Ark’s”.

19 Unknown Author, *A Visit to Texas in 1831*, being the journal of a traveller through those parts most interesting to American settlers, with descriptions of scenery, habits, etc. (Houston TX, Houston Post Dispatch, 1929), 192.


22 A Texas state historical marker is at this location.

23 Gregg, *Commerce*, 366.

24 This describes the route of Trammel’s Trace just northeast of present day Redwater, Texas.

25 Williams, GIS *Aided*, 169. The Lobanillo Cuts on the El Camino Real west of Nacogdoches retain the effects of heavy trail use and has seven parallel ruts.

26 Unknown, *A Visit to Texas*, 205-207.


30 “An Act To Authorize the Post Master General to establish a Post Route.” *Laws of the Republic of Texas*, Approved Dec 18, 1837, signed into law by Sam Houston.

31 As a result of investigations by the author and colleagues, this crossing was identified. The efforts of Bob Vernon of Bivins, Texas led to a Texas state historical marker at this location on Highway 77 near Dalton Baptist Church.

32 This intersection became part of the Daniel Barecroft headright survey near the location of Old Unionville and present day Naples in northwestern Cass County.
This section of the road had many iterations. It was first referenced in surveys as the "Mexican Trace," but part of it was the road the Spanish used to intercept the Freeman & Custis expedition in 1806. It also became part of the Jonesborough to Nacogdoches Road and was also referred to in one land survey as Dayton’s Road.

The old Indian village was about a mile east of what is present day Hughes Springs, near where Highways 11 and 49 intersect. Some years later, a dispute over the ownership of this land, which became the Joseph Burleson headright survey, was a landmark case in the Texas Supreme Court. See Urquhart v. Burleson. Supreme Court of Texas. 6 Tex. 502, 1851. Reports of cases argued and decided in the Supreme Court of the State of Texas during a part of Galveston term, 1851, and the whole of Tyler term, 1851. Volume 6, 251-257.

William B. Dewees, Letters from an Early Settler of Texas. (Louisville KY, Morton & Griswold, 1852), 22. Dewees states he saw the Indians on Boggy Creek, but it is unclear which of the many streams named Boggy Creek that might have been.

Near the present town of Jefferson, Texas.

Betje Black Klier, Tales of the Sabine Borderlands: Early Louisiana and Texas Fiction by Theodore Pavie. (College Station TX, Texas A&M University Press, 1998), 99. In those days, copal was an item of commerce, used for its sweet aroma.

This crossing would later be the site of Ramsdale’s Ferry, where Harrison, Rusk, and Panola counties intersect at the Sabine River.

Gregg, Commerce, 360.

Samuel Botsford Buckley, Geological and Agricultural Survey of Texas. (Houston TX, A.C. Gray State Printer, 1874), 92.

The path of Trammel’s Trace no longer appears on the old maps from the Texas General Land Office (GLO) at a point just north of present-day Mount Enterprise. The reason for the sudden ending of its demarcation is not known. The location of the old trail from that point to its end at Nacogdoches about twenty-six miles farther south was unmapped on Texas headright surveys. However, roads across early Spanish land grants are the likely route and a comparison with land features and historical sites provides a likely route.

Williams, GIS Aided, 37. See also Perttula, et al, “Caddo Ceramics from an Early 18th Century Spanish Mission in East Texas: Mission San Jose de los Nasonis (41RK200).” Journal of Northeast Texas Archaeology. 2009, Vol 29, pp 81-89. Spellings vary and include Nazones, Nasonis, and Nazonis, which is the name cited in the Handbook of Texas.
Spanish Land Grants: Survey notes for the Mariano Sanchez grant in Nacogdoches County (Sanchez, Mariano; Abstract 51; File Number SC 000044:5) and Luis Sanchez (Sanchez, Luis; Abstract 51; File Number SC 000044:5) surveys are found online at the Texas General Land Office.
How Texans Opposed Civil Rights Legislation in the 1960s: Evidence from Letters to Future House Speaker Jim Wright

BY NEIL ALLEN

This article examines the role of Civil Rights in the career of future House Speaker Jim Wright, and the views of Texans about nondiscrimination legislation. Drawing on letters sent to Wright (D-TX) commenting on the legislation that became the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1968 (Open Housing) Civil Rights Act, this article examines how Texas citizens reacted to, and mostly opposed, nondiscrimination legislation. This analysis finds that economic and property rights arguments are the most common type of argument, and explicitly racist arguments are relatively rare. This article also places the opposition of Jim Wright's constituents to Civil Rights legislation in the larger context of his mixed record on the issue while a back-bench representative, and how this record supported his later rise to leadership of Democrats in the House of Representatives.

Jim Wright is best known as Speaker of the House from 1987-1989, and for his rapid fall from power due to an ethics scandal in 1989. But before he was a leader in the House, he represented the Fort Worth-based Texas 12th district during debates over Civil Rights legislation in the 1950s and 1960s. Wright compiled a mixed voting record on Civil Rights, voting against the 1964 Act but voting for the 1957 and 1968 Civil Rights Acts and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Wright successfully navigated through this tumultuous period while representing a district supportive of segregation, positioning himself to move into the House leadership in the 1970s. Using archival records, this paper establishes the strength of opposition to civil rights legislation in the Texas 12th district, and illuminates the sources of that opposition. It finds that Wright's constituents were overwhelmingly opposed to Civil Rights Legislation, and that the opposition was heavily oriented toward support for property rights.

While civil rights bills were seriously debated in Congress since at least the 1940s, and civil rights legislation has been debated and passed
in the 1970s and 1990s, the period from 1963-68 contained the most serious and sustained action in the area since at least Reconstruction. Congress passed the momentous Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the less important 1968 Civil Rights Act focused on fair housing. Versions of the 1968 legislation were hotly debated in 1966 and 1967 as well. Votes on these bills evidenced cross-party coalitions in support and opposition, and also the shrinking of the pro-civil rights coalition over time. This period provides an opportunity to examine how future leaders like Jim Wright navigated this complex issue environment. Wright’s election as House Majority Leader in 1976 was particularly notable, considering that he was elected by a caucus that had become strongly committed to the pro-integration position that Wright himself came to relatively late.

The 88th-90th Congresses (1963-1969) included seven members that would later enter or advance in congressional leadership: Wright of Fort Worth, Carl Albert of Oklahoma, Hale Boggs of Louisiana, Gerald Ford of Michigan, John Rhodes of Arizona, Robert Dole of Kansas, and Robert Michel of Illinois. This article focuses on Wright, whose election as House Majority Leader in 1976 was the last in a continuous string of victories by candidates in contested leadership elections that were more closely identified with the Southern conservative wing of the party than their opponents, referred to in a recent work as “The Austin-Boston Connection.

This article first discusses the career of Jim Wright in Texas and national politics, with a focus on his complex relationship to Civil Rights. I then discuss the arguments made by citizens who wrote to Wright about Civil Rights in the 1960s, drawing on archival records from his papers housed at Texas Christian University. I then conclude with a discussion of the role of Civil Rights and property rights in the shift of Texas from a Democratic to Republican state.

Jim Wright as Future Congressional Leader and “Southern Liberal”

Jim Wright was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1954, and served until his resignation in 1989. He had previously served as the elected Mayor of the small city of Weatherford west of Fort Worth, and served one term in the Texas State House from 1947 to 1949. He was “known as the foremost liberal” in the Texas House
delegation in the 1950s in particular due to his willingness to oppose the interests of petroleum producers. He was ambitious and upwardly mobile throughout his career, first focusing on winning a Senate seat. When Lyndon Johnson became Vice President in 1961, Wright ran for the open Senate seat and finished third, less than two percentage points behind the appointed Democrat Sen. William Blakely. Wright would have likely beaten Republican John Tower in the runoff, as Blakely lost Texas liberal support due to his conservatism. Wright attempted to gain the nomination to run against Tower in 1966, but ended his campaign after his fundraising fell below expectations.

The Civil Rights politics of Texas in the 1950s and 1960s were a complex mix of continued Jim Crow segregation along with gradual progress toward integration. Conservative Governor Alan Shivers fought against post-Brown v. Board of Education school desegregation with the rhetoric of interposition, echoing the "massive resistance" politics of his counterparts in Virginia and the Deep South, using the Texas Rangers to prevent court-ordered integration in Mansfield and Texarkana. A liberal like Ralph Yarborough, however, could win election in 1957 at the height of the post-Brown backlash, and fight off a segregationist challenge from future President George H.W. Bush in the 1964 general election. Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson, occupying legislative and executive leadership roles in Washington, charted a middle path.

This complexity of Civil Rights politics was present in the Metroplex region that sent Wright to Washington. Fort Worth had a White Citizens' Council as early as 1955, and the NAACP was active in the city in the years after Brown v. Board of Education. North Texas State College (now the University of North Texas) in nearby Denton had long denied admission to black undergraduates, but peacefully complied with a federal court ruling in 1955, enrolling over 247 black students by 1958 (Marcello 1996). This pattern of gradual integration stimulated by legal action and peaceful protest activity fits the larger pattern identified by Brian Behnken in his study of the Dallas civil rights experience. He argues that the "Dallas Way" of business-oriented consensus politics provided opportunity for black protest actions to stimulate gradual integration: "To maintain the positive image of the city and promote business growth, Dallas's leaders proved willing to negotiate with blacks and implement desegregation measures." This movement toward integration occurred while Dallas County sent Bruce Alger, a
right-wing anti-integration Republican, to Congress until 1964, and in 1960 voters in the Dallas School District voted against school integration by a four-to-one margin.

Operating on the left of Texas politics in the 1950s and 1960s, Jim Wright was vulnerable to attack as an integrationist, in particular because of his record as, by Texas standards, a liberal leader of the UT College Democrats while an undergraduate. The student group called for anti-lynching legislation, ending the poll tax, and integrating the university’s law school. When running for reelection to the Texas House of Representatives in 1948, Wright’s Democratic primary opponent attempted to use the ongoing NAACP litigation involving the University of Texas Law School against him. Eugene Miller, a former state legislator, said Wright wanted “every uppity nigra with a high school diploma” to attend the University of Texas Law School. Wright responded by running a newspaper ad saying “I believe in the Southern tradition of segregation and have strongly resisted any efforts to destroy it.” Wright attempted to stay within the mainstream of Texas Democrats, opposing particular facets of Jim Crow while protecting against right-wing militant attack.

Wright continued his rhetorical support for segregation during his early service in the U.S. House. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled public school segregation unconstitutional in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 and ruled that schools must be integrated “with all deliberate speed” the following year, Wright followed the lead of more senior Southern leaders in supporting the rejected “separate but equal” standard that had been precedent since Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896. Then in his first term, Wright said the Supreme Court “erred in judgment ... I feel that segregation could be ideally maintained without discrimination, that is possible for facilities to be equal while being separate.” This rhetorical support for segregation, while maintaining his legislative focus on bringing federal resources to Fort Worth and Texas with his seat on the Public Works Committee, followed the example set by Speaker Sam Rayburn (D-Bonham) and Rayburn’s former protégé then-Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson. Rayburn and Johnson maintained rhetorical support for segregation, strengthening their ties to Southern conservatives while also retaining support of the progressive liberal minority within their respective Democratic caucuses.

The white backlash that swept the South, particularly the Deep South, in the years following Brown eroded this mildly segregationist
middle ground that Wright and other Texas liberal and economically-populist congressmen were attempting to occupy. The congressional manifestation of the regional backlash was the "Southern Manifesto," a militant segregationist statement of principles produced by Deep South Senators. The Manifesto's creators, led by Senator Richard Russell of Georgia, did not ask Rayburn or Johnson to sign, saving them from a choice that would have inflamed a large portion of the caucus they were attempting to lead. Russell and other senior Southern Senators also were attempting to support a future presidential run by Johnson, which would only be possible if he could be acceptable to non-Southern liberals in the party.

Lowly back-benchers like Jim Wright, however, had to make a public choice to sign or refuse to sign. Following the pattern seen in other Peripheral South states like Florida, North Carolina and Tennessee, the Texas House delegation split on the issue. Right-wing members from rural areas of the state, like Martin Dies and John Dowdy of East Texas and O.C. Fisher of West Texas, signed the Manifesto and continued to incorporate anti-integrationist arguments into their broader anti-communist conservatism. Wright Patman of Northeast Texas, whose populist criticism of large financial institutions as Chair of the Banking Committee made him a hero to younger Texas liberals like Wright, signed the Manifesto. Facing a right-wing primary challenge, representing the part of the state most similar to the Deep South, Patman acted to protect his position of power over other areas of public policy.

Wright, however, joined the majority of the Texas House delegation in rejecting the strident position of the Southern Manifesto. Historian Tony Badger, attempting to explain why border-state Senators and House members rejected the Manifesto, attributes the Texas pattern to the influence of Rayburn. The Speaker saw the document as a potential wedge within his fractious caucus. The state's position in the 1950s House was as strong as any in history, with the Speakership and several committee chairmanships. This was only possible if the Democratic Party could stay relatively united and in the majority. Also Rayburn and Johnson were engaged back home in a struggle for control of the state party, against the conservative faction led by Governor Alan Shivers that wanted to withdraw support from the national Democratic Party's presidential ticket in 1956. This ultimately successful effort of Rayburn and Johnson depended on isolating the more militant anti-federal government conservatives within the party.
In justifying his more integrationist stance, Wright drew on his Christian (Presbyterian) faith, stating that "hatred is evil in the sight of God. The Negro is a child of God, as am I and as are my kinsman. He possesses an immortal soul, as do we." Wright would continue this support for limited integration by voting for the 1957 Civil Rights Act, which was limited to the right to vote and had little practical effect on Southern society.

Like many more moderate Southerners in Congress, Wright offered mixed and conflicted positions on the more consequential Civil Rights legislation of the 1960s. He voted against the 1964 Civil Rights Act, citing support for property rights. He supported the more popular Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the quite controversial Civil Rights Act of 1968, with its mostly ineffectual focus on open housing. This eventual move to a more integrationist position would serve him well in the most important election of his career, his narrow victory as House Majority Leader in 1976.

Constituent Letter Data

Like every member of Congress, Jim Wright received letters from constituents and other citizens commenting on issues of the day. Fortunately for students of Civil Rights, Congress and Texas History, Wright and his staff preserved incoming correspondence on Civil Rights legislation from 1963-1966, totally 893 individual letters. This archive opens a window on the opinions of everyday Texans in this period of contestation and transformation of racial norms and rules. It also illuminates the expectations that constituents had of representatives like Jim Wright, and the cross-pressures elected officials experience.

Citizens who write letters to their congressman are a clearly self-selected group. The decision to write to a person who they likely know only from popular media and sometimes a newsletter marks them as more interested in public affairs than their fellow citizens, and likely holding more definite and considered opinions. Archival data like that under review here is best understood as a measure of "motivated public opinion," providing a more narrow but deeper look into the attitudes of citizens on legislative issues than possible in public opinion polling.

Letters provide a measure of district opinion, both in terms of basic support and opposition and the substantive content of actual and potential voters. While the letters sent to congressional offices are not a representative sample of district or voter opinion, they do commu-
nicate to legislators and their staff the views of those they represent. Particularly in the 1960s, when polling was infrequent at the national level and virtually nonexistent at the district level, letters provided members a proxy for district opinion. Taeku Lee, in Mobilizing Public Opinion (2002), argues that letters to the president have significant advantages as a measure of public opinion over opinion polls, in that they do not contain "non-attitudes" and contain argumentative content.

This article examines letters to Congressman Jim Wright, sent to his Washington office and preserved in the James Wright Papers at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. The collection contains files with letters from 1963 and 1964 addressing the legislation that became the 1964 bill. The archive also preserves letters from 1966 addressing that year's proposal, mainly concerning the inclusion on Title IV, an open housing provision that would have applied to sales of owner-occupied homes and rental of units in structures with at least four units. No letters have been preserved from 1967 and 1968 concerning the modified and weakened open housing bill that became the 1968 Civil Rights Act.

There is no definite way of knowing that a given folder contains all letters sent to a congressman like Wright on a given issue during a particular time. All files analyzed here contain both support and opposition to legislation, which supports the assumption that there is not a corresponding "For" or "Against" file that was discarded. It is likely that staff discarded some portion of out-of-district and out-of-state letters, particularly since the practice of congressional offices was often to only reply to in-district letters. The data analyzed below, although limited by multiple kinds of selection bias, support generalizations about support for civil rights legislation, and the content of arguments made by constituents.

All letters were coded for Support or Opposition to Civil Rights legislation. I only included letters where support or opposition to Congressional action is clear from the text. I did not include letters that expressed an opinion but did not express support or opposition, although these were few in number. I did not include letters asking for a copy of legislation, unless the request was part of a larger argument for or against legislation. I counted a letter as commenting on legislation if the writer mentioned a bill number, a proper or informal name for a specific bill, or referencing action by Congress. Letters that specifically called for action on school desegregation or limitation of the power of the Supreme Court were not included, although these were also few in number.
Argumentative Content: Letters to Jim Wright

Letters from constituents not only provide data on support or opposition to particular legislation, they reveal the type of arguments that underlie support or opposition. A letter that argues the 1964 Civil Rights Act should be opposed by their congressman because it is unconstitutional shows a different foundation for opposition than one who claims their opposition comes from a belief that non-whites are inferior. The kinds of arguments made for and against legislation reveal the reasons for those positions, and also the kind of arguments writers think will be persuasive.

All letters analyzed in this article were coded for their general stance toward Civil Rights Legislation, and five argumentative types: Property Rights, Constitutional, Communist/Socialist, Totalitarian, and White Supremacist/Racist. Many letters used more than one type, and the majority of letters used none. Some letters merely called for support or opposition to legislation, and others had argumentative content that did not fit into my typology. I define and discuss each type below with evidence from the Wright collection.

(See Table 1)

Nearly nine out of ten letters in the Civil Rights files of Jim Wright, housed at Texas Christian University, express opposition to civil rights legislation. Many letters merely urge Wright to vote against legislation, as he did in 1964, but not in 1965 and 1968. Others use creative metaphors to illustrate their opposition. A married couple from Fort Worth wrote on June 4, 1966 that the proposed open housing legislation was “garbage”:

My husband and I are small property owners, and we think the bill is so rotten it stinks. When we find anything around our house that stinks we throw it into the garbage. We expect you to do the same with that bill.

Some writers, like this constituent from Fort Worth in 1966, presented fantastical slippery-slope arguments about the push for civil rights legislation:

If Bills of this nature are passed, how far are we from the legislation that would make it a federal crime for a person to reject any marriage proposal on the ground the refusal involves the other party’s civil rights? Not too
Many writers in opposition to legislation presented variations on the theme of a loss of core American values, often linked with arguments that civil rights legislation was merely a Trojan Horse for some other nefarious goal. A frequent refrain was that bills were “10% civil rights, and 90% federal power.”

These defenses of the established order in American politics used several distinct, but often complimentary, types of argument. After reading a subsample of letters, I selected four types that seemed common or likely in letters: Property Rights, Constitutional, Communism/Socialism, and White Supremacist/Racist. After coding around half of the Wright letters, I added an additional type for Totalitarian.

The most common type of argument, present in 37% of letters, was Property Rights. A letter received this code if the writer argued explicitly that legislation was eliminating property rights, or the rights of property owners. I also included letters that argued that legislation took away the right of owners to make decisions involving their property. Some letters in this category also made reference to specific examples, like defending the ability of an owner of a house to rent a room to a person of their choosing.

An illustrative example, from a Fort Worth resident on June 9, 1963, makes reference to Wright’s relative liberalism and connects it to property rights and other values:

I disagree most emphatically with your work in the U.S. House of Representatives for you have continually spoken for the trend toward Socialism in this country. I am against the Administration’s proposed Civil Rights Bill. It is an unconstitutional attempt to deprive American (sic) of their property rights. . . . You have made me a Republican.

This letter, like many others, joins a property rights argument to other argumentative types discussed below. This letter is typical of those supporting Property Rights, in that those rights are presented as universal, not specifically as enjoyed by white Americans. A letter from the National Restaurant Association on Nov. 1, 1963, presented a more concrete argument against the public accommodations section of the bill that became the 1964 Civil Rights Act:
By subjecting private business to unnecessary harassment and by enabling the Federal Government to exert more control over individual rights and over private business, the proposals, if enacted, can only result in the diminution of free enterprise and of the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

Property Rights is presented here as a universal concept at the core of American politics and society. Some writers also presented a pragmatic case for property rights, focusing on the experience of the property owner under proposed legislation:

A property owner, acting in good faith, might be accused of denying the right of a member of a minority group or anybody else, for that matter, to buy his property. The accuser has the right to sue the owner of such property. Whether the accuser is acting in good faith or out of sheer malice the end result will be the same. The property owner may face months or years of costly litigation trying to establish his innocence. He will not be able to dispose of his own property while settlement of the case is pending. To many in our mobile American society where jobs often demand frequent transfers, this could mean disaster.

Wright, who would later vote for the 1968 Civil Rights Act that included restrictions on the choices of residential property owners, echoed this opposition to legislation on Property Rights grounds in his “Wright Slant” newsletter to constituents on June 23, 1963. This support for a Property Rights critique of then-president Kennedy’s civil rights proposals garnered support from letter writers, with one correspondent from Houston writing on June 28, 1963 that Wright’s statement was the “highest expression of Americanism.” Responding to a constituent letter also in June of 1963, Wright drew a clear distinction between public institutions that are legitimately subject to federal government regulation, and private institutions that are exempt:

There is in my mind a clear legal difference between publicly owned, tax-financed facilities on the one hand, and private business establishments, privately owned and individually supported on a voluntary basis by individual customers on the other.

I believe in the government’s duty to protect the constitutional rights of every citizen. But one of these rights is the right of private
property. I do not want to see the government violate this right, any more than I would want it to violate any other constitutional right of our citizens.

This focus on private property that Wright shared with his constituents helps to explain how Wright supported bills focusing on voting rights in 1957 and 1965, but opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Wright continued this Private Property focus in the first phases of the open housing debates on the 89th and 90th Congresses. Responding to a Ft. Worth letter of June 26, 1966, opposing how "our government has systematically eroding the rights of one group of citizens to improve those of other citizens," Wright wrote on July 1, 1966:

Thank you for your communication. I think you are correct in your opposition to Title IV of the proposed Civil Rights Bill of 1966. In my judgment, this provision should not and will not be enacted. I have, in fact, so advised the President.

Certainly I could not vote to remove from the American people a right of choice so basic and so personal as the selection of those to whom we might wish to sell or rent our homes.

This does not mean that I favor discrimination against any race. You and I probably feel about the same way. It will be recalled that I actively supported the Voting Rights bill last year, assuring to all Americans these equal and fundamental rights of citizenship. But just as I opposed certain provisions of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 as an unwarranted invasion of the rights of private property, so I do oppose this new proposal.

Wright also voted with 20 of 22 Texas congressmen to remove Title IV (a strong open housing provision) from the 1966 Civil Rights Act. While Wright's papers do not include letters from 1967-68, it is unlikely that they would reflect any change in their opposition grounded in Property Rights. Letters to Earl Cabell, representing a similar next-door district, reflected the same trend of opposition from 1966 through 1968.

Constitutional argument was the second most common type, at 17% of letters. I counted letters in this group if the writer argued particular legislation was unconstitutional, or that constitutional rights were at stake in this issue. While writers occasionally mentioned specif-
ic constitutional provisions like the Republican Form of Government clause or Free Speech, Constitutional arguments usually were of the general variety shown here by a Houston resident on Oct. 14, 1963:

The Civil Rights Bill of 1963 is a further extension of federal executive power created at the expense of individuals of all races. It is nothing but a law for a controlled system of life which is in direct opposition to our Constitution. . . . Stand up for Constitutional government which guarantee States and human rights as God granted us these rights by doing everything in your power to defeat the so called Civil Rights Bill of 1963.

Related to both Property Rights and Constitutional arguments is the next most common type, Communism/Socialism at 8%. I classified letters as in this group if they criticized legislation as Communist or Socialist (which were used interchangeably and negatively in context). Writers would have to explicitly mention either ideology, like a Fort Worth resident on June 20, 1966:

High among the objectives of Communism is the abolishment of the concept of private property. To deprive a person by law of the right to absolute ownership of property and the ability to choose within certain bounds what he may do with it, is to make a mockery of the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness as ascribed by our forefathers who founded this Nation of ours.

Interference with private property or economic choice of any type is often classified as communist or socialist, usually with no reference to the rights of minorities that might have countervailing claims.

The following lengthy quote from a Smithfield, Texas resident on July 2, 1963 shows how anti-communism, support for private property and a constitutional theory based on economic rights were reinforcing concepts. This letter to Jim Wright also explicitly casts these concepts as unconnected to racial rights, but founded on universalistic concepts:

We are not against colored people having more freedom; however, we Abhor and Detest any ruling that destroys free enterprise. We are speaking of the proposal that any café owner or owners of various other business establishments must cater to negroes whether they wish it or not.
This is merely another step our government is taking toward becoming a Socialistic State. Businesses should always have, as in the past, the right to refuse service to anyone. When the government of the United States has the power to tell an individual how he must run his business and to whom he must cater, we no longer have a government by the people and for the people. Instead, we have something very similar to what we fought against in World War 2.

This letter also shows another argumentative type, Totalitarianism.

Letters are classified as using a Totalitarian type of argument if the writer claimed that civil rights legislation (usually the 1964 variant) constituted a government on the same form as the Nazi Germany or Soviet Russia. The following passage from June 17, 1963 shows this classification of civil rights legislation as creating a totalitarian government.

We, as citizens of the United States, and you, in particular, should be quite concerned with the powers that the President is trying to assume. We speak of Russia having a dictator and of Germany having had its Hitler, when we sit and watch a man that can certainly be classified as more of a dictatorial individual than either the case of Russia or Germany.

This letter also claims that President Kennedy is attempting to become a dictator, a claim also sometimes applied to his brother Robert as Attorney General. Merely making this argument about increasing presidential power was not classified as Totalitarian.

An interesting finding of this study is the relative absence of explicitly racist or white-supremacist arguments. Only 3% of letters used a White Supremacist or Racist argument. I defined this category as including writers that argued non-whites were inferior to whites, that ascribed negative characteristics to non-whites, or that explicitly supported segregation. Some writers like a Fort Worth resident writing on June 6, 1966, made explicitly race-conscious arguments in conjunction with other argument types:

I do not want to live in the same rooms with Negroes, Mexicans or whatever else wishes to move in with me. I have a bed room and need some one for companionship but I sure don't want a Negro or a Mexican. This makes us as bad as the Communist or Gestapo.
Such arguments, however, only appear in 26 of 893 letters from Jim Wright’s Texas constituents.

This relative lack of explicitly racial or racist appeals should not be seen as evidence of the absence of racism or white supremacy by letter writers. It however does reveal the assumptions of citizens about which arguments will likely be persuasive of their representatives, and also how underlying racist attitudes were held in conjunction with race-neutral arguments. Letter-writers were over twelve times more likely to ground their argument in economics than to reference racial characteristics.

Conclusion: The Shifting Politics of Race and Property Rights

Review of letters sent by Texans to future House Speaker Jim Wright yield two significant conclusions about race in American and Texas politics. First, a skilled, or possibly lucky, politician like Jim Wright could still navigate the politics of race and federal public policy from a Texas foundation, and ascend to the national leadership of the leftward-shifting Democratic Party. Second, Wright’s incoming correspondence on race in the 1960s reveals the primacy of private property rights in Texas and American political culture.

Jim Wright, like most Democratic Texas congressmen of the time, was able to avoid serious electoral challenge. The closest he ever came to defeat was in 1980, when he defeated a well-funded Republican challenge from Fort Worth Mayor Pro Temp Jim Bradshaw 60%-40% while Ronald Reagan was carrying the district 52%-46% over Jimmy Carter. What is more significant is his rise to leadership in 1976, during period when liberals and reformers were advancing within the Democratic Party. When he ran for the open Majority Leader position in 1976, he was a throwback to a different Democratic Party. As a high-ranking member of the pork-barreling Public Works Committee, he was a defender of advancement by seniority, which had been drastically weakened by reforms after the 1974 election. Wright had a mixed record on Civil Rights, and sought leadership of a party where Southern segregationists were a rapidly-shrinking minority.

Wright’s voting record in the 1950s and 1960s was only partly what his constituents, or at least those constituents motivated to write letters, wanted from their man in Washington. His support in 1968 of a federally-enforced, though weak, right to buy or rent housing irrespective of race cut against the nearly 9 in 10 of respondents who opposed
federal intervention on behalf of racial minorities. But that vote on the 1968 Civil Rights Act moved him closer to his non-Southern colleagues. The growing backlash against federal social and economic action was rapidly eroding the Great Society coalition, with support for Civil Rights legislation on final passage dropping from 69% in 1964 to 59% in 1968 on final passage. Wright, along with future Majority Leader Hale Boggs of Louisiana, were two of only five of 294 members who voted on both bills, but shifted from opposition to support. This was a case of “pre-leaderships signaling,” showing liberal members of the caucus that Wright and Boggs were joining the pro-civil rights mainstream of the party.

Wright understood his vote against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and his roots in the segregationist one-party Texas of the 1950s and 1960s, were a liability in his 1976 race. Combined with his support for the Vietnam War and relative conservatism on domestic issues, Wright’s voting record placed him behind two other ambitious Democrats as the party met to select new leadership. The other two major candidates had unimpeachable Civil Rights credentials. The frontrunner was Phil Burton (D-CA), from San Francisco, had voted for all Civil Rights bills from 1964 forward and was a leader of the reformist group of Democrats that had swelled with the 1974 Watergate landslide. Richard Bolling (D-MO) of Kansas City had an even longer record of pro-Civil Rights activity as the primary supporter of integration legislation on the powerful Rules Committee. Wright’s notes for his speech to the closed-door Democratic Caucus meeting prior to the Majority Leader election outline his argument on Civil Rights. He emphasizes his votes for the 1957 Civil Rights Act, and every piece of integration legislation from the 1965 Voting Rights Act forward. He explicitly references his evolution on the issue as a Southern liberal.

Wright specifically addressed his prior mixed record on civil rights in a letter to Democratic Houses colleagues Nov. 17, 1976, just prior to the Majority Leader vote. He writes that “I could not pretend to have a ‘perfect’ record on civil rights,” claiming he voted against some bills “for reasons which I thought at the time to be valid but which I no longer believe to be correct.” Wright cites his refusal to sign the Southern Manifesto, vote for the 1957 Civil Rights Act, and support for all post-1964 integration legislation, stating:
I am pleased by the fact that I have probably have as good and long-standing a record of support for basic civil and human rights as anyone from my part of the country could be expected to have and survive in the political turbulent years that are behind us. My record in this regard is quite different from that of most of my colleagues from the geographic area I represent.

The Texan attempts to diminish the sterling pro-integration records of his rivals Bolling and Burton, writing "it takes a hell of a lot more courage and conviction for a person from my area to take these public positions than it does for someone from Kansas City or California."

The evidence presented here from Wright's incoming constituent correspondence clearly support his retrospective evaluation of the political context facing a relatively-liberal Southerner deciding whether to support or oppose the 1964 Civil Rights Act. While most House members from the region did vote against the landmark legislation, Wright probably overstated the narrowness of his options. Fellow Texas liberal House member Jack Brooks, then representing a district that included Beaumont and much of rural East Texas, voted for all civil rights bills including the 1964 legislation and was consistently reelected. Charles Weltner, representing an Atlanta-centered Georgia district, voted for the 1964 Act and was narrowly reelected. But Wright's larger point about his electoral vulnerability on the issue was correct.

Wright's Civil Rights evolution was just enough to support his narrow election. Bolling and Burton had both alienated potential supporters with ideological inflexibility and an unwillingness to cultivate personal relationships. Wright's base of Southerners, conservatives and committee chairman enabled him to eliminate Bolling by two votes in the penultimate vote, and to best Burton by a single vote for the Majority Leadership. This narrow victory enabled Wright to succeed Tip O'Neil as Speaker of the House in 1986, and to function as one of the most effective modern legislative leaders until his rapid fall in 1989.

Wright was the last leader of the Democratic Party in Congress to emerge from the coalition of urban machine liberals and Southern conservatives that dominated the party in the House and often the Senate in the middle part of the twentieth century. When forced to resign over allegations of financial improprieties involving publishing contracts and campaign finance in 1989, Wright was replaced by Tom Foley of Washington State, a liberal in the reformist tradition. Not
since Wright have the House Democrats had a leader who was from the South, or from the moderate portion of the party.

The opposition to Civil Rights legislation, and to federal government action in general, that emerges from Wright's incoming correspondence reveals one source of this leftward shift in the Democratic Party. The movement of whites to the Republican Party that began on the presidential level in the 1960s would by the 1990s leave the Democrats as a clear minority in Southern congressional elections. Candidates from states like Texas could no longer count on the support of the dozens of moderate and Southern populist members necessary to advance in House leadership. This shift was evident in the ascension of Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) to the leadership of House Democrats in 2003. A protegé of Jim Wright's 1970s antagonist Phil Burton, and representing Burton's old San Francisco congressional seat, Pelosi is firmly anchored on the left end of a left-trending party. When Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) left the leadership to run for president in 2004, Martin Frost (D-TX) began preparing to challenge Pelosi, then the second-ranking House Democrat. Frost, a former Jim Wright loyalist who represented much of Wright's old Fort Worth base, would have created a rerun of the 1976 Majority Leader race with a challenge to Pelosi from the moderate wing of the party. But after canvassing potential supporters, Frost decided that his chances were so slim he would not even attempt to challenge the California liberal Pelosi.

The opposition to Civil Rights, which Jim Wright sometimes joined and later repudiated, is often conceptualized as fundamentally about racism and white supremacy. But the prominence of property-rights arguments in Wright's incoming Civil Rights correspondence reveals a different facet of the anti-integration narrative. This data demonstrates the fundamental importance of individual economic rights in the American political tradition. Support for a free-market society in which individuals are unencumbered by government regulation was a powerful component of the defense of segregation. This property-rights narrative, while idealized and ignoring the valid economic rights claims of minorities, allowed supporters of segregation to connect their economic and personal interest with broader egalitarian themes in American politics.

Seen from the perspective of the property and economic-rights grounded opposition to integration of Wright's constituents, the legis-
lative output of the federal government in the 1960s is even more remarkable. When President Lyndon Johnson of Texas pushed through the 1964 Civil Rights Act, he was staking his political future and that of his party on a vision of federal government action that ran counter to the understanding of American individuals rights held by Texans. Even in a then-strongly Democratic Fort Worth represented by the relatively-liberal Jim Wright, integrating public accommodations and employment was understood as a denial of fundamental individual rights.

The narrative of economic individualism, while supportive of white privilege, could be expressed by individual citizens in a facially non-racist manner. When the brief pro-federal action consensus of 1964-65 evaporated in the conflict of the late 1960s, the Democratic Texas of Lyndon Johnson and Jim Wright gave way eventually to a Republican Texas of strong devotion to individual economic liberty and opposition to federal government action. The direct achievements of Civil Rights legislation remain, as legal segregation is no more and minorities participate in the political process. But the argument of Jim Wright's constituents, that the federal government has no place limiting or influencing the economic choices of individuals and businesses, continue to drive American and Texas politics.
Notes


2 The NAACP litigation, which Wright was unconnected to, eventually led to the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Sweatt v. Painter* in 1950, ruling that the University of Texas Law School must admit blacks.

3 The Eisenhower administration’s stronger bill, which was similar to the later 1964 Act, could not overcome a Senate filibuster in 1956. The 1957 bill was able to avoid the same fate by subjecting claims of denial of voting rights to jury trial, insuring continued white control of civil rights policy in the South.

4 Phone calls to offices also serve as a kind of proxy for public opinion, but have not been preserved in archives.

5 Works using by George Lovell (on Civil Rights) and Alan Brinkley (on populist critics of President Franklin Roosevelt) use archival letters to establish mass political attitudes during the New Deal period. See George I. Lovell, *This is Not Civil Rights: Discovering Rights Talk in 1939 America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression*.

6 Wright also replied to letters from clearly out-of-district locations (for example Houston or Dallas). This might be related to the fact that he was preparing for another statewide Senate campaign in 1966.

7 I here assume that a writer in 1964 who, in a general manner, calls for Congress to support or oppose school integration is not specifically commenting on the portions of the 1964 bill that gave the federal government the ability to bring suit on behalf of children in segregated public schools. Infrequently writers would comment directly on that part of the bill, and those letters were included. Wright likely received letters in the 1950s and 1960s about school integration judicial rulings like *Brown v. Board of*
Education, but these were not preserved in his papers.

8 Jim Wright Papers (JW), Texas Christian University Special Collections, Civil Rights File.

9 JW.

10 These letter writers do not address the possibility that guaranteeing civil rights might require federal action, including enhanced authority.

11 JW, Civil Rights File.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 The attempt to strip Title IV failed 190-222, but the bill died in the Senate.

18 A sample of letters to Cabell 1966-68, drawn from his papers at Southern Methodist University, were 82% opposed to Civil Rights Legislation.

19 JW, Civil Rights File.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 JW, Undated notes, Civil Rights File.

24 Richard Bolling Papers, letter from Jim Wright to Robert Dawson, University of Missouri-Kansas City Library Special Collections, Jim Wright folder.


26 Houston Chronicle Nov. 9, 2002.
Table 1: Argument Type, Jim Wright Letters

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Historic Survey of Waskom, Harrison County, Texas

By Thomas Speir

Editor's note: The format and style of the following article differs from most pieces in the Journal. It follows the accepted format and practices of such surveys.

The City of Waskom is located on the Texas and Louisiana state lines, at the intersection of FM 134 and 9, U.S. Highway 80, and Interstate Highway 20. It is eighteen miles southeast of Marshall in southeastern Harrison County.

Native American Presence

Several Archaic Period (6000 B.C. - 300 B.C.) artifacts have been found in East Texas, including eastern Harrison County. This is evidence of a human culture living in and traveling through the Waskom area, some 3400 years before the construction of the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx. (B. M. Staff 1999).

These humans likely became the ancestors of various tribal units of the Caddo Confederacy, including the Yatasi near present-day Shreveport and the Petit Caddo around Caddo Lake. At their peak, ca. A.D. 1100, the Caddo were the most highly developed prehistoric culture known within the present state of Texas. Texas takes its name from the Spanish spelling of a Caddo word “taysha,” that means “friend” or “ally”. The Spanish explorers pronounced the work “tejas”. Early chroniclers encountered at least two dozen named, independent Caddo groups, some speaking separate dialects of a common language, which helped each other as members of a common confederacy.

Thomas Speir is the chair of the Harrison County Historical Commission
"If the Comanches might be likened to the Asiatic Huns, the Caddoes might crudely be called the Romans of Texas." (W. W. Newcomb 1961) The Caddo were highly successful farmers with an assured food supply that made possible a dense population and elaborate social institutions, like full time priests and chieftains.

In July 1542 several hundred Spaniards and Portuguese passed through western Harrison County as part of the Hernando De Soto expedition. A century would pass before Europeans returned to the Caddo world. In the intervening period recurring diseases (like smallpox) decimated Caddo populations. Caddo societies grappled with catastrophic changes caused by rapid population loss, incursions of enemies from the north and east, mounted raiders from the west, and with a changing economy.

The relentless push of Anglo-American settlers from the east forced the Caddo to abandon much of their homeland as they grew smaller and smaller in number, with the remnant groups banding together for survival. With the signing of the Louisiana Treaty of Cession in 1835, the Caddo transferred nearly a million acres of their land to the United States.

An 1835 survey map designating various head rights within the then Department of Nacogdoches clearly identified an Indian trail that ended in an area marked only by "Ind. Village." This area was 9.5 miles northwest of present day Waskom. An archaeological study suggests that this 1835 village is an early Alabama Indian site. Findings at the site included French trade goods. This study documents that tribes from the eastern United States were moving into the eastern Harrison County area in the early 19th century and trying to establish settlements. (Armstrong 2002)

Early European Intrusions

At one time both Spain and France claimed the area of present Texas and by 1716 Spanish presidios and French trading posts at Natchitoches, Louisiana were separated by only a few miles. In 1736 the commanders at the two outposts agreed on a Red River tributary between the Sabine River and Natchitoches, as the boundary between Louisiana and New Spain. (Handbook of Texas Online, "Boundaries" 2010)

When the United States purchased Louisiana in 1803, the boundary of the purchase was not defined. During its short life, The Republic of Texas, 1836-1845, was plagued with boundary problems with Mexico
and also with the United States. One of the most troublesome spots was the north-south line that ran between the Red and Sabine Rivers in East Texas. In 1838, the Texas Secretary of State complained:

The country through which the line will pass is now rapidly settling by an active and enterprising population, whose condition is rendered unpleasant and embarrassing (sic) by the uncertainty which exists in regard to the true boundary. While such a state of things continues this Government cannot enforce its revenue laws, neither can it make suitable preparations for the defense of that frontier.

Between 1806 and 1846 a 100 mile by 200 mile strip of land between the Red River and the Sabine River became known as the Texas Badlands, or the Redlands, due to the significant amount of blood spilt there. During this forty year period the United States and the Republic of Texas disputed ownership of this strip of land, with neither side exercising jurisdiction. This became an ideal location for persons operating outside the law.

Confusion prevailed. Only a joint survey of the boundary line by the two nations would resolve the many problems, but such was not forthcoming until 1841. Many of those living on the lands surveyed by the United States continued to owe their allegiance to Texas, and one resident, Robert Potter, who lived on Potters Point, became a member of the Texas Congress.

Treaties were tied to the thirty-second parallel, which runs just south of present day Carthage, Texas. North of the thirty-second parallel, the border no longer followed the Sabine. Rather, it followed a line that had yet to be drawn. In addition, this section was still occupied by the Caddo, lands that were becoming more desirable to settlers. In 1835 the Caddo signed the Treaty of Cession, and in 1837 town lots began to be sold in the new community of Shreveport.

Tempers flared occasionally, but only one military encounter developed. In November, 1838, the “Texas Militia” crossed the border into Caddo Parish while pursuing a band of Indians. Briefly “occupying” Shreveport, the Texans almost precipitated a break in relations between the two nations. (Ruffin 1973)
Some settlers in this frontier took advantage of the situation by showing no loyalty to either country. Surveyors at this time recorded just a few dozen cultivated fields, and five Indian villages. As more settlers arrived the need for a firm boundary became more important.

The area that later became Powellton came to be settled due to the fact that it was a midway point between Marshall and the Red River. An east/west road developed between the two sites by which products could be brought into east Texas and raw materials could be taken to the steamboats on the river. (Duncan 2011)

The Regulator-Moderator War

The Regulator-Moderator War was a feud in Harrison and Shelby counties in East Texas from 1839 to 1844. The roots of the conflict lay in the frauds and land swindling that had been rife in the Neutral Ground, the lawless area between the American and Texas borders.

Charles W. Jackson, a former Mississippi riverboat captain and a fugitive from Louisiana justice, shot a man at Shelbyville in 1840. Jackson then organized the Regulators to prevent “cattle rustling.” In turn, the Moderators were organized by Edward Merchant to moderate the Regulators. The first major confrontation between the groups came on July 12, 1841.

The feuding groups signed a truce on July 24, 1844, which protected “good and unoffending citizens.” The struggle was again renewed in August 1844. About 225 Moderators attacked sixty-two Regulators near Shelbyville. The Regulators were reinforced by prominent citizens from Harrison County, one of whom was killed.

On August 15, 1844, President Houston ordered the militia to go make peace in East Texas. They arrested ten leaders from both sides and brought them to San Augustine. Both Regulators and Moderators eventually joined Capt. L. H. Mabbit’s company to serve in the Mexican War (1846-1848). (Cuthbertson 2010)

Powellton

The town now known as Waskom was established around 1850 and was first known as Powellton. Jonathan S. Powell received a 640-acre land grant northwest of today’s Jonesville, a community 3.5 miles northwest of Waskom.
The original document, on file at the Texas General Land Office, reads as follows:

The Republic of Texas: County of Harrison

This is to certify that John S. Powell appeared before us the board of Land Commissioners of Harrison County & proved according to Law that he Emigrated to this Republic in Feb. 1841. That he is a married man and having never received a certificate is entitled to an unconditional grant of six hundred and forty acres of Land. Given under our hands and seals this 6th day of May 1844.

(Abstr. 564; File Number 000187)

The State of Texas, Harrison District; Survey No. 120 District No. 3; May 26th, 1848

Survey made for John S. Powel of 640 acres of land situated in Harrison County. About two miles west of the Thirty sixth mile post in the Louisiana State and Texas boundary line. It being the quantity of land to which he is entitled to by virtue of a Certificate No. 250...

A portion of Waskom included land purchased by Jonathan’s brother, Thomas D. Powell from a land grant issued to W.H. Adams. (Waskom, Texas, Eudora Coleman Hodges, Waskom File D29-1674B, Harrison County Archives.) T.D. Powell came from Alabama in 1842. The Texas 1846 census shows Powell residing in Harrison County but under no township. (Bach-Prather, SPA Center for Regional Heritage Research: Harrison County Historical Sites Survey; Resources by Location 2013)

Thomas D. Powell settled in the N.H. Adams headright, exactly two miles south of his brother, John. The year of his arrival is documented by a statement in his wife’s obituary, written by their son-in-law, Rev. Horace Bishop of Tarrant County at whose home Mrs. Powell died. (Hodges 1994)

Powell was the first storekeeper and postmaster in the community. A post office was established under the name of Powellton on May 18, 1850, which officially established the town. It continued to exist under that name through the Civil War until 1872. According to the U.S. Appointments of Postmasters, John M. Waskom was appointed the General Postmaster in 1866 for Powellton (Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-Sept. 30, 1971).
In the early days of settlement in East Texas, it was not uncommon for plantation owners to establish stores on their property. Powell's store was already in operation when, on July 1, 1854, Dr. Perry made purchases there. Dr. Perry was an old family friend from the Leigh area of Harrison County, who also made purchases in Jonesville that day. (Hodges 1994)

Historians often agree that a farmer holding 20 or more slaves could be termed a planter. A Waskom area planter was Zachariah Abney who, with his wife Elizabeth Susannah McClure, operated a plantation of several thousand acres spread along and across the state line into Louisiana. He also operated the Abney General Store.

Records indicate Abney had 22 slaves in 1854 and 55 in 1860. Records show he never hired an overseer and insisted on keeping slaves grouped together in family units. This non-standard method of doing business worked well for everyone. They worked a farm of 600 improved acres and 500 unimproved acres and in 1860 produced 5,000 bushels of corn, 400 bushels of sweet potatoes, 10 bushels of Irish potatoes, and 126 bales of cotton.

In addition they maintained livestock holdings of 10 horses, 12 mules, 60 head of cattle and 100 hogs. To be everywhere at once, Abney relied on Black supervisors who helped manage the farm, fence and building repairs, feeding and clothing of all the families, and medical requirements. Abney needed to be an expert in both farm management and group psychology. (R. G. Campbell 1987)

Once a reasonably large consignment of cotton was baled, it would be shipped by steamboat to New Orleans and later, Shreveport. A commission house there would sell the crop for the best possible price, retaining a 2.5% commission, and keep the plantation's credit on their books. Planters would then send orders for needed supplies for the coming year, such as salt, sugar, molasses, coffee, gunpowder, medicines, and clothing materials. This order would be gathered and shipped to the planter, the cost being deducted from the plantation's credit, along with another 2.5% commission. If expenses outran income during a bad year, credit would be extended at 8% interest.

The use of the telegraph for communication with the rest of the United States and Texas began with the chartering of the Texas and Red
River Telegraph Company on January 5, 1854. The first telegraph office was opened by the company in Marshall, Harrison County, on February 14, 1854. Patrons were offered connections with New Orleans via Shreveport. It is likely that this telegraph line ran through Powellton, and there may have been a station established there. (Wilcox 2010)

On March 18, 1872, Powellton was changed to “Waskom Station,” (shortened to Waskom on September 29, 1881) in honor of the Reverend John Millage Waskom who was instrumental in bringing the railroad through the town. By this time, Powell had moved and resettled in Hearne.

John Waskom was a stockholder in an early railroad company of the area, Texas and Pacific (not the same as the later T & P line,) and it was through his influence and management that the railroad line from Marshall was extended through Waskom to the Louisiana line. (Waskom, Texas, Eudora Coleman Hodges, Waskom File D29-1674B, Harrison County Archives.)

By 1884 Waskom had an estimated population of 150 inhabitants, two black Baptist churches, a school, a sawmill, four steam gristmills and two cotton gins. (Lentz 2010) The city was incorporated on August 15, 1894. By 1900 the town had three stores, a one room school, and about a dozen families. Waskom’s population fluctuated at approximately two-hundred until 1920 when the population grew to 1,000 after oil was discovered in the area.

The Railroad

The history of Waskom is tied, in no small way, to the history of the railroad which was introduced to Waskom in the mid-19th century. The Texas Western Railroad Company was chartered on February 16, 1852. In 1857 the railroad constructed twenty-three miles of track between Marshall and Swanson’s Landing on Caddo Lake.

It should be noted that the railroad did not “arrive” as an extension of previously laid track, as it did in most communities. Rather, the railroad was brought to Harrison County by steamship and an independent track was laid to Marshall.

The Texas Western Railroad Company changed its name to the Southern Pacific on August 16, 1856. The Southern Pacific owned a line
between Longview and Waskom (Powellton) and leased the line of the North Louisiana and Texas Railroad Company from the Texas state line to Shreveport.

During the Civil War part of the line to Caddo Lake was taken up, and the rails were re-laid to Waskom where connection was made with the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Texas Railway Company, thus forming a line between Marshall and Shreveport, Louisiana. (Werner, Handbook of Texas Online, “Texas Western Railroad” 2010)

The American Civil War seriously affected transportation in Texas. The outbreak of fighting halted all railroad building for seven years, and difficulties in maintaining rolling stock caused existing service to be interrupted. As previously noted, several miles of track between Swanson’s Landing, on the south side of Caddo Lake, and Jonesville was taken up and re-laid eastward from Marshall to Waskom (Powellton) for military purposes. (Wooster 2015) This was for a very practical purpose.

Most rails were manufactured in Northern states, allowing Union trains to travel at relatively high speeds on well-maintained tracks. In the South, most rail lines were still quite primitive, often using “strap rail”. This was basically a metal plate that was layered on top of a wooden “rail”. It was inexpensive to make but severely restricted safe traveling speeds. As such, 15-20 mph was likely the top speed on these lines. Re-laying good quality rails made prior to the Civil War allowed for greater speed.

The “strap rails” also had a common habit of wearing loose where it was nailed down to the wooden rail with large spike nails. Wheel action would cause the strap to coil up violently when it came loose, even ripping up thru the bottom of cars. Railroad men referred to these as “snakeheads”. Where solid iron rail or pressed U rail (sheets of metal pressed into an inverted U shape with flanges for spiking) was used, speeds could be increased. Iron rails were still weak, however, and the U rail was not very strong either. It is likely that 20-30 mph was top speed, even for Express trains. (VSmith 2005)

Some of these solid iron rails were reportedly carried through Powellton on to Shreveport. There, the Confederate Navy laid down the keel of the Ironclad ship “Missouri” in 1862. Her casement was constructed of well-angled surfaces covered over with railway iron, laid vertically in two interlocking layers to avoid cutting the iron. (Writer 2016)
To consolidate the Confederate chain of command west of the Mississippi River, the Trans-Mississippi Department was created in 1862. The headquarters was established in Shreveport, Louisiana. However, a yellow fever epidemic in Shreveport at that time prompted the Confederate commander to move most, but not all of his operations to nearby Marshall, Texas. This required a fast and reliable means of transportation and communication between the two cities. Waskom, which was still referred to as Powellton during this time period, was located mid-way between these two cities. (Jurney 1996)

During this period a steam locomotive in the Southern U.S. could travel, on good rails, at an average top speed of 15-20 mph. This compares to a stagecoach which could travel 3-5 mph; horse and wagon, 2-4 mph; ox team and wagon, 1-2 mph; or walking at 2-3 mph. When speed was of the essence of necessity, travel by rail was the obvious choice. (DLDance 2005) It is not hard to picture these steam powered trains traveling daily through Waskom (Powellton), heavily loaded with officers, politicians, supplies and equipment.

Harrison County’s African American population during the 1870s far exceeded other counties in the Piney Woods, and many of these persons went to work either on the railroad directly, or in related industries, such as migratory logging camps. Logging camps usually included a “barrel house,” a portable structure that served as a recreation center for laborers in the camp, and often included an inexpensive upright piano.

Oral histories and objective evidence strongly suggest that the music now known as Boogie Woogie, with its iconic left-hand bass lines that mimic the sounds of the logging camps and the rail yards, originated in the area of Marshall, Texas in the early 1870s. The earliest players named left-hand bass figures after stops along the T&P line, including, for example, the “Tyler Tap,” the “Jefferson,” the “Waskom,” and the “Marshall.” (Canson 2016). This music became a part of daily life in and around the Waskom area.

The sixty-six mile railroad owned by the Southern Pacific between Longview and Waskom and the leased section from the Texas state line to Shreveport was acquired by the Texas and Pacific on March 21, 1872. This was the only predecessor of the company in Texas to have built and operated a railroad. This Southern Pacific was not related to
the later Southern Pacific system, which originated in California. (Werner, Handbook of Texas Online, “Texas and Pacific Railway” 2016)

Nearly thirty miles of track was built from Jefferson to Waskom in 1900 by the Sherman, Shreveport and Southern Railway. Rights for tracks were obtained over the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Pacific Railroad from Waskom to Shreveport. (Werner, Handbook of Texas Online, “Sherman, Shreveport and Southern Railway” 2010)

A branch of a second railroad, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, was built through the community about 1900. The population had grown to an estimated 207 people in 1904. Oil was discovered near Waskom in 1924, and Waskom’s population increased to some 1,000 inhabitants by the mid-1920s.

The Texas and Pacific Railway system had their railroad’s shops and general offices for Texas located in Marshall. The county seat benefited from the railroad and from its position as a retail center for the surrounding area. Nevertheless, a majority of the county’s workers were employed in agriculture during this time period. (R. B. Campbell 2016)

**Cotton and Timber**

Harrison County remained overwhelmingly agricultural and rural from 1880 to 1930. Waskom was home to two cotton gins to handle the high volume of cotton brought into the city.

Old plantations were eventually divided up and leased to tenants and sharecroppers. Tenants lived in houses on the landowners’ property. For their year of work, after the cotton was ginned, they received two-thirds of the value of the cotton. After the cotton was sold and the accounts settled, the tenant or sharecropper often had little or no hard cash left over. This socially enforced debt peonage, known as the crop-lien system, began after the Civil War and continued in practice state-wide until the 1930s. (Karen Gerhardt Britton 2010)

Farmers first saw the ravaging effect of the boll weevil during the 1890s. A high demand for cotton during World War I stimulated production, but a drop in prices after the war led many tenants and sharecroppers to abandon farming altogether and move to the cities for better job opportunities. (Karen Gerhardt Britton 2010)
Factors that caused the decline of cotton production in Texas after the 1920s were the federal government's control program, which cut acreage in half, the increase in foreign production (the state had been exporting approximately 85 percent of the total crop), the introduction of synthetic fibers, the tariff, the lack of a lint-processing industry in Texas, and World War II, which brought a shortage of labor and disrupted commerce. (Karen Gerhardt Britton 2010)

In 1937 each of the town's two cotton gins averaged nearly 3,000 bales each. An entire sharecropper family could produce 4 bales of cotton, utilizing 2-3 acres per bale. These figures also applied to the cotton gins in Leigh, Jonesville, and the two in Elysian Fields, all within a ten mile radius of Waskom. The total land under cultivation in the area was 40,000-50,000 acres.

By 1940 cotton production had dropped to 14,000 bales. In 1941, and in 1945, the two cotton gins in Waskom shut down. By 1949 the remaining four cotton gins in the area were only processing 8,400 bales. In the 1950s that number dropped to 3,600 bales. In 1960 the gin at the T.C. Lindsey store in Jonesville processed 950 bales, and the other three gins processed a total of 1,800 bales, for a grand total of 2,750 bales in 1960.

Productivity had increased by this time. Production of a bale of cotton only required 2 acres, and a family could produce 5 bales in a year's time. Land once used for cotton production was being used for other crops and, more extensively, cattle production. (Allison April, 1961)

Waskom also served as an early logging center, which provided employment opportunities for many area African-Americans. Pine was harvested from the local forests and hauled by mule train or rail to Waskom mills. The mill town of Lorraine was built neighboring Waskom to the east, between Waskom and the state line. It contained a large commissary, hotel, gasoline station, offices and several homes. A "General Highway Map" for Harrison County, dated 1936, and prepared by the Texas State Highway Department clearly shows the "Waterman's Logging Tram" serving Lorraine from Panola County in the south and traveling north, nearly paralleling the state line to Lorraine.

Starting as the Waterman Saw Mill in 1914 with 35 employees, the mill was owned by William Madison Waterman. It was acquired by the
Frost Johnson Company of Shreveport in 1922. The Waterman Lumber mill suffered an estimated $30,000 in damages following a fire on Friday, June 5, 1925. This was a large amount of money at this period in time, and represents a major investment in the Waskom economy.

That company later changed its name to Frost Industries and operated until 1952.

Olin Mathison Chemical Corporation bought the mill and closed it in 1953, ending one of the first industrial payrolls in Waskom. (Waterman Mill Gave Rise to Company Town of Lorraine 1994)

Oil and Gas

During the early 20th century, the price of cotton, the traditional main source of income for Harrison County, continued to fall. Harrison County remained overwhelmingly agricultural, as cotton continued as the main crop. However, the Great Depression hit the county hard. The value of farm property fell 30 percent between 1930 and 1935, and there were almost 1,500 fewer farms in 1940 than in 1930. For the first time, a majority of workers depended on nonagricultural occupations, and unemployment became a problem. (R. B. Campbell 2016)

Waskom suffered from unique criminal activity in the early 20th century that was directly related to the oil and gas industry. When the East Texas Oil Field was discovered in 1930, Texas was already the leading oil producing state of this nation. This began with the advent of Spindletop's gusher down in the Gulf Coast Region in 1901.

Chronologically, at about the time of the Waggoner discovery in Wilbarger County in 1909, exploration along the Texas-Louisiana border in the vicinity of Caddo Lake resulted in discovery and development of the area in 1910. Bubbling ponds at the lake indicated the presence of gas which led to exploration of the area.

The East Texas Oil Field was the proving ground on which experimental Texas laws and experimental methods were tried and proved. The Oil and Gas Conservation Act of 1919 prohibited production of crude oil "in such manner and under such conditions as to constitute waste" and the Texas Railroad Commission was charged with doing "all things necessary for the conservation of oil".
The discovery and development of the Waskom Gas Field around 1924 led to the first shipment of oil from that field being delivered in Marshall on August 25, 1926. The discovery of natural gas spurred the development of the Dixie Pipe Line Company, which eventually dedicated $650,000 for expansion of their gas plant near Waskom in 1927. This was possibly influenced by Waskom's position on the Texas/Louisiana state line. (Dixie Pipe Line Company Will Expend $650,000 for Plant Near Waskom 1927) The sudden influx of oil and gas wealth into the area created opportunities for criminal activities. On December 16th, 1927, Rudd's Store in Waskom was burglarized and $600 taken. Reported in The Shreveport Times the following Sunday, this type of crime was not common in such a small community. Again, this might have been influenced by its location on the state line.

On August 14, 1931, a meeting of approximately 1,500 citizens, producers and royalty owners was held at Tyler, Texas due to the rapid and uncontrolled development of the East Texas Field. On the following day, a committee appointed by this mass meeting called upon Texas Governor Sterling, insisting that a state of insurrection existed in Gregg, Smith, Rusk and Upshur counties and that riot and destruction of property and probably bloodshed was imminent.

On August 15, the Governor issued a proclamation declaring Martial Law in the counties of Upshur, Gregg, Rusk and Smith. Martial law in these nearby counties continued for six months, enforced by National Guard troops, but was eventually struck down by the courts.

The failure of Sterling's martial law plan left the state at the mercy of the oil thieves. In June, 1932, the Texas Railroad Commission was allowing East Texas 325,000 barrels of oil daily, this figure being taken to represent the limit of production that might be allowed without physical waste. Amounts variously estimated to run from 100,000 to 350,000 barrels daily in excess of this figure were finding their way into the market with devastating effect.

While there were a half dozen modern efficiently constructed refineries in operation in East Texas, the number of topping and skimming plants had increased to nearly fifty. These plants continued to receive all the oil they required at prices far below the posted market price for oil. At the low prices they paid for crude, these refineries could only re-
ceive supplies from operators who would sell them amounts in excess of the allowable set by the Railroad Commission.

Methods of checking these plants were difficult, as most of the oil was run to them in a secretive, underhand manner, through hidden lines and from sources unknown to the Railroad Commission employees. Newspaper articles from the Shreveport Times document these issues. For example, The Times article from February 23, 1935, page 7, discusses patrols establishing headquarters specifically to stop shipments of "hot oil" at Waskom.

Stolen oil was hauled from the wells at night, and the community of Waskom and its environs was an ideal area to cross the border. Tank trucks delivered petroleum to topping plants; the converted oil, in the form of low grade gasoline, was, in turn, distributed by fleets of trucks which virtually commanded the principal highways leaving the oil field for cities and towns within a radius of several hundred miles. Practically none of this product had paid the state gasoline tax; the plants manufacturing it kept no visible records of their crude purchases.

Any attempt to trace the source of the oil going to these plants ended in failure. Employees of the Railroad Commission were repeatedly turned away from the small refining plants in the field with shotguns and threats of violence. Shady practices have doubtless been resorted to in almost every other field in this country, but none of the old tricks compared with the ingenuity of the East Texas oil racketeer. (Silvey 1938)

Municipal Expansion in the Twentieth Century

The newspaper articles concerning Waskom in the early 20th century dealt primarily with the usual activities of weddings and funerals, as well as numerous local sporting events. These were only periodically marred by reports of criminal activity or injuries sustained by employees in the petroleum or railroad industries.

At the turn of the century, Waskom acquired its first resident physician, Dr. Z.E. Vaughn, whose home was built in 1901. It should be noted that Waskom, like the rest of the nation, was exposed to the dangers of the Spanish Flu in 1918. It was estimated that between 600-700 cases of the flu were reported in Marshall alone, resulting in 70 deaths. (Knight 1919)
Poverty still plagued the county. During the depths of the depression in 1935, 1,114 heads of families in Harrison County were on government relief. As late as 1940, 850 workers were employed on public emergency works, and another 838 were without jobs. (R. B. Campbell 2016)

The county also retained its black majority through these years. Blacks constituted more than 60 percent of the total population in every census from 1880 to 1930. Harrison County enjoyed transportation facilities that were better than average for East Texas counties, but its nonagricultural economy expanded slowly from 1880 to 1930.

In order to understand the social dynamics of the Southern United States during the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, it is necessary to reflect on the common displays of racial inequality. The "Jim Crow" laws following the Civil War required "separate but equal" treatment of African Americans. If a service, such as a water fountain, were made available, a separate water fountain for Blacks would be made available.

The extreme end of this inequality was the legacy of lynchings. These hangings have been defined as violent, public acts of torture designed to traumatize African Americans. Numerous such acts were never reported or recorded. However, throughout all of Harrison County, 15 lynchings were recorded from 1877-1950, ranking the county third in the state. (Equal Justice Initiative 2015)

However, some of the citizens of Waskom had a history of banding together for mutual support. In 1941, just prior to World War II, townspeople formed the Waskom State Guard. This was a group of volunteers intended to protect the town from saboteurs and invaders. (Stringley 1994). There is evidence that nationwide, Blacks and Whites put aside their differences to support the war effort during World War II.

The city of Waskom provided its fair share of intelligent persons who worked to provide for the common good both at the local and state levels. Cread L. Ray, Jr. was born 1931 was elected judge of Harrison County in 1959, was elected to the Texas House of Representatives, and to a seat on the Sixth Court of Appeals. He became an Associate Justice, Texas Supreme Court, 1980-1990. (Tarlton Law Library 2004) Other notable persons claimed by Waskom include Ben Z. Grant and Sam Baxter.
The 1940s and early 1950s saw a change in the economy of the Waskom area as the community was changing from a farming community to an industrial area. Population and income increased, and the community began to feel the need for an area bank.

Merchants had begun the practice of borrowing change from each other until they could drive the twenty miles, during a work day, to get to a bank. This meant the merchants had to carry an extra-large amount of cash during hours of operation, and this led to the additional expense of insuring that extra cash. Night time robberies increased.

Additionally, local citizens could not secure loans locally for financing homes, so Waskom at this time was mostly made up of rental properties. This was compounded by the availability of affordable appliances, furniture, and automobiles. (Allison April, 1961)

To meet this need the First State Bank, Waskom, was opened in 1922. In 1928, business at the bank was good, and a new building was constructed to house the bank. This included resources of one half million dollars, and $200,000 in loans, primarily on cotton crops and farm land. However, in 1929 the Wall Street Crash heralded the Great Depression. The bank was purchased by the First National Bank in Marshall. The bank left Waskom in 1932.

When the old Waterman Saw Mill was sold, Mr. Waterman formed the Waterman Brick and Tile Works. This business was later sold to Tri-State Brick and Tile Company of Shreveport who sold it in 1954 to the Acme Brick Company of Fort Worth.

Although discovered in 1924, it was not until after World War II that the Waskom gas field reached full development. Three refineries were developed; Arkansas Louisiana Company, the Waskom Natural Gas Company, and the United Gas Company plant at Panola, nine miles south of Waskom. (Allison April, 1961)

Caddo Machine Works began production of fabricated steel products in Waskom after World War II. In 1953 the company was bought by Fabricated Steel Products which operated until 1972. This brought a large payroll and prosperity to Waskom.

In 1972, facing plans to close the plant, the business was purchased by 12 employees. By the mid-1970s Fab Steel employed 600 persons.
Corporate headquarters were moved to Shreveport in 1981, but in 1985 the company fell victim to a nationwide slump in the steel industry. This resulted in 400 employees being laid off, which was a critical blow to the Waskom economy.

Transportation

Almost all East Texas roads in the early 20th century were still dirt, and subject to inclement weather problems. Some towns “paved” heavily traveled downtown streets to help support businesses in those areas, and to display to visitors that their town was “progressive”. Roads between towns were addressed by local county governments and, as such, varied widely in their quality.

The Texas Highway Department (now the Texas Department of Transportation) was not created until 1917. The Atlanta District of TxDOT that serves East Texas was not created until 1932. A copy of the oldest map of Harrison County in the TxDOT archives, revised up to 1940, shows the first four paved highways in Harrison County (US 59, US 80, SH 154 and SH 43) as well as some of the county roads of that era. (Sandifer 2009)

The State Highway Department Map showing “Proposed System of State Highways”, dated June, 1917, shows a highway entering Texas in the approximate location of Waskom, and traveling through Marshall and Longview. It is labeled as Number 11, the “Jefferson” Highway, extending from Denison to Marshall. “Jefferson” seems to refer to a title, not a destination, as the highway does not come near the town of Jefferson in Marion County. The map of proposed highways legend indicates that this was to be a “1st Class Highway (Concrete, Brick, Bituminous Types).

It should be noted that once Highway 11 leaves Longview, it becomes Highway 15, the “Dallas-Louisiana” Highway, which stretched from Dallas to Longview. This became an integral part of one of the first trans-continental highways in the United States.

A 1936 State Highway map shows this road to be a paved road, now labeled as U.S. Highway 80. It is joined in Waskom by a bituminous surfaced road entering the city from the northwest, coming in from Jonesville. Traffic legends indicate that U.S. Highway 80 had close to
2000 vehicles travelling on it in a 24 hour period. This same map shows the population of Waskom to be 1,117.

Parallel to this Jonesville road is the T&P Railroad line. It is joined by the Louisiana, Arkansas and Texas (L.A. & T.) Railroad line which enters Waskom from the north (Karnack) and then turns to parallel the T&P line until it crosses the state line into Louisiana. Five other “un-improved roads” are shown on this state map entering Waskom from different directions.

Added to all of this was Interstate Highway 20 which passed south of Waskom. The interstate was completed in 1964, which pulled many travelers away from the city, which was effectively bypassed.

The Dixie Overland Highway

In the 1920’s the City of Waskom literally became the “Gateway to Texas”. One of the first “all-weather”, or paved trans-continental highways in the United States came through Waskom as the entry point to Texas from eastern states. It was named the Dixie Overland Highway, or U.S. Highway 80. For the first time, this brought traffic, year around, from all over the United States into Waskom.

The 250 or so named trails, roads and highways crisscrossing the United States in the early 20th century carried picturesque names, but they had become a confusing collection of unorganized pathways. At the request of the State highway agencies, the Secretary of Agriculture appointed the Joint Board on Interstate Highways in April 1925. This Board developed standardized signs, including the original U.S. shield, identified the Nation’s main interstate roads, and conceived a system for numbering them. (Weingroff 2015)

The Secretary of Agriculture submitted the Joint Board’s proposals to the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) for consideration. Finally, in November 1926, AASHO adopted the U.S. numbered plan. The first official description of the approved U.S. 80 appeared in the U.S. numbered log that AASHO printed in April 1927.

Beginning in 1927 the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) issued press releases describing some of the major U.S. numbered highways. One November 1927 release (“United States Routes Make Cross-Continent Run Easy”) stated:
Two . . . United States routes have a special interest for prospective transcontinental travelers living in the large eastern cities; one - Route 40 - because it is the most direct motor route to California, and the other - a combination of Routes 40, 61, 70, 67, and 80 - because it is a year-round road and, for the present at least, is more surfaced throughout than any other transcontinental highway.

Around this time, the BPR issued a separate release on U.S. 80 summarizing the condition of the road:

Route 80 has a total length of 2,671 miles, of which 798, or about 30 percent, are paved with brick, concrete or bituminous macadam, according to figures of the Bureau of Public Roads of the United States Department of Agriculture. More than half the mileage, or 1,472 miles, is surfaced with gravel, sand-clay or topsoil. Climatic conditions in the Southern States are favorable for this lighter construction, which is proving adequate for present traffic. Some of the States have developed very successful methods of treating sand-clay and lime rock roads to eliminate dust which is the one important defect of such surfaces in this region. On the route there are 315 miles of graded and drained earth roads, and 86 miles of unimproved highways.

In the years since then, U.S. 80 has shifted somewhat to place it on improved alignments and city or town bypasses. More important, U.S. 80 has been shortened, and no longer serves as a transcontinental highway. Following a request from Texas and New Mexico, approved on October 12, 1991, Dallas became and remains the western terminus of U.S. 80.

Education

Prior to April of 1894, the only school in Waskom was conducted in a single room which J.H. Bryson added to his home specifically for that purpose. On April 3, 1894 an election was held for free school purposes. The petition which called for this election was signed by 20 prominent local citizens, including S.E. Waskom, (the son of John M. Waskom), John L. Waskom (grandson of John M.) and T.C. Lindsey of Jonesville.
The election results were 67 voted in favor, and none opposed. A new one-room school was built, with another building added later. This led to the construction of a two story, four room school which burned in 1920. In 1922 it was replaced by a brick building consisting of 12 classroom, 2 restrooms, and an auditorium. The cornerstone for this $40,000 school was laid on September 19, 1922. This school also burned in the 1950s.

In 1930 the Waskom Independent School District served 277 white pupils and 807 black pupils in segregated facilities. A photograph from 1936 shows a large group of Boy Scouts on the steps of the Waskom Elementary School, which burned in 1957. Boy Scouts also enjoyed swimming at "Camporees" at summer camp held at George's Lake in 1933.

By 1957 several new school construction programs were completed. More recently, on July 28, 1974, an open house was held at the high school to show off the new classrooms, gymnasium and renovated areas. (Staff 1994)

Religion, Entertainment and Sports

From the 1880s to the early 1900s the city of Waskom flourished. Numerous churches were established, and at one time, it was thought there were more churches in Waskom than any other type of structure. (Stringley 1994)

Church gatherings, which had always enjoyed the participation of large groups, continued to be a mainstay of social interactions. Revivals and camps were regularly scheduled. A "big, new hall" in 1922 hosted a visiting orchestra.

Sports became a major part of life in both the Anglo-American and African-American communities in the Waskom area. Competitions between baseball clubs were well publicized in area newspapers, and were well attended. The high school also developed football and basketball teams. In the late 20th century Alvin Earl Moore from Waskom went on to become a major league baseball player who played for White Sox and the Braves from 1976-1980. (Carle 2000)

Hunting was a competitive sport. The March 25, 1924 edition of the
Marshall News Messenger had a front page announcement that Dr. H.H. Vaughn of Waskom, one of the “best known and most prominent fox hunters of Harrison County” would be hosting John M. Brenham, president of the National Fox Hunters Association of the United States.

Waskom had its own movie theater, called the Wakea, and later, the Don Theater. It often showed first runs of movies before the Strand Theater in Shreveport. This theater stayed in business up into the 1960s.

Starting On April 3, 1948, Waskom residents could drive to Shreveport’s Municipal Auditorium, located just west of nearby downtown Shreveport. On that date, a new program named The Louisiana Hayride began a weekly showcase of talented singers, songwriters and performers. This nearby venue gave Harrison County residents an opportunity to observed world-class talent in what became known as The Cradle of the Stars. (Shreveport Municipal Auditorium 2016)

In 1955, Waskom born Grady Gaines capitalized on the Boogie Woogie tradition of the Waskom area when he was offered a job to head up a newly formed band supporting entertainer Little Richard. He became a well-known tenor sax blues player. (Dahl 2016)

Architecture

Commercial construction materials had started with log buildings in the early days. As the economy improved, these were replaced with wood frame buildings on pier and beam foundations. Wealthy individuals could contract for the local manufacturing of brick if they wished as Harrison County is known for having excellent clay outcrops. Besides potteries, there were numerous “handmade” brick making facilities in the area.

As “manufactured” brick became more economical and easier to come by, more structures were built using this method. Early American architects embraced influences of Roman styles. Although this style had been superseded elsewhere by the Greek Revival in the 1830s, Harrison County lagged behind in the latest trends. Early Classical structures near Waskom include Locust Grove (1847) in Jonesville and Mimosa Hall (1844) in Leigh. (Bach-Prather, Harrison County Historic Sites Survey 2013)
As railroads expanded, housing components from factories, such as doors, windows, roofing, and decorative detailing became more widely available, and desirable. This changed the box-like homes into complex and elaborate structures, and business could begin splurging on structural details that were more decorative than functional and utilitarian.

The Neoclassical style (1895-1950) became best-known after the World’s Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893 which mandated a classical theme, therefore, the architects designed dramatic colonnaded buildings with facades dominated by classical columns and symmetrically balanced windows.

The Winston Taylor home in Waskom was built in 1941 by Winston Taylor, a cousin of First Lady “Lady Bird” Johnson. The Winston Taylor home is a 1941, two-story, brick, Neoclassical square structure with a flat roof. It consists of a double-gallery porch, supported by four classical columns which cover three of the seven bay facades. It is the only site in Waskom that bears a historical recognition medallion.

Brick and wood are the two most common materials used on the exterior of commercial buildings. Prominent display windows facing the busy highway were intricate to Waskom’s downtown buildings. Historic materials tell of the availability of those materials, relative wealth of the original owner, skill of the designer and builder and aesthetic sense of the owner. Brick masons and stone masons of the past possessed skills no longer practiced. Materials are important features in understanding and interpreting historic buildings.

In regard to the buildings that make up historic downtown Waskom, here is a quote from the City of Palestine’s Design Guidelines that is fitting in regards to the styles of Waskom’s commercial buildings:

“Even the commercial utilitarian ‘style’ is a distinct form associated with late 19th and early 20th century commercial design. In such buildings massing, form and facade arrangement are the primary design elements and the building does not display detailing directly associated with any particular style.” (Associates 2002)
Businesses

Prior to the stock market crash of October 1929, Waskom enjoyed a construction expansion of its downtown area. This was contemporaneous with Federal enforcement of the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, known as prohibition, which occurred from 1919 until its repeal 1933. Archeological studies in eastern Harrison County in the 1990s accidentally encountered remains of illegal stills, which was a large “cottage industry”.

This economic boom during the early part of the 20th century naturally drew the attention of both honest and dishonest citizens. The February 19, 1915 edition of The Shreveport Times reported that the iron safe from the Waskom post office had been hitched to a cart and taken one mile down the railroad track before the perpetrators “blow same at leisure”.

Such high-profile events were unusual enough to warrant headlines, such as the March 30, 1929 headline in the Shreveport Times which read “Seven Waskom Stores Robbed Late Thursday.”

It was during this time that construction began on what is now the Historic Downtown Waskom District. This included grocery stores, variety stores, barber shops, doctor offices and pharmacies, all centered on the post office which was located near the train depot. This downtown area came to serve the entire community, and outlying farms.

W.L. Rudd had been doing business in Waskom for decades. He built a brick store on Waskom Street built in 1928 to replace his wood frame store. Waskom Street (Avenue) was the Dixie Overland Highway, and paralleled the T&P railroad line. The Waskom train depot was within easy walking distance of these buildings, and the Rudd Store was one of the first businesses travelers from the east encountered when they entered Texas. Rudd obviously understood the value of this interstate business as advertisements for his store can be found in the pages of the Weekly Shreveport Times ever since the 1880s.

Other businesses in the downtown Waskom area that developed over the years included Cbastain’s Variety Store, and Dr. Fowler’s office. Young patients that behaved could then be taken to the drug store which had a soda fountain that served soft drinks and floats.
The importance of the downtown business to the entire community was evident when a pledge to “rebuild” was issued on Sunday, January 31, 1932 following a devastating fire that destroyed two structures the previous Friday.

In 1933 the town had 1,117 inhabitants and thirty-nine businesses, including a large timber mill and brick plant. By 1941, at the beginning of WW II, Waskom had shrunk nearly by half, with a full-time population of 564. This did not include persons who worked in Waskom, but lived elsewhere. (Lentz 2010)

In 1946 new gas and distillate producers were discovered in the area, and the Waskom economy was also bolstered by the local Frost Lumber Industries. The population increased from 719 in 1952 to 2,182 in 1988.

Twenty-five business leaders banded together on January 5th, 1954 to form the Waskom Chamber of Commerce. Their purpose was to consolidate efforts to bring new industry to Waskom. By their second meeting membership had risen to fifty-six members.

Thanks to the work of Housing Committee member Don Long, Jr., a twenty-four home F.H.A. financed subdivision helped to relieve the housing problem in Waskom, which was still predominantly rent homes and few home owners. One hundred and four additional lots were laid out.

The Chamber initiated several efforts to bring new industry to Waskom. Bond issues were passed that allowed for the construction of new schools for blacks and whites. The City built a New City Hall and fire station with modern equipment. The town was surveyed and a city map made. Street lights were installed and street markers placed at street corners in 1954. (Allison April, 1961)

Waskom had not been home to a bank since 1932. Thanks to the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, the First State Bank, Waskom, Texas received its charter and opened its doors for business on December 4th, 1954. They modernized the old original 1920s bank building. Over $16,000 was spent for a new front to the building, air conditioning, fixtures and supplies.
Acme Brick began a million dollar remodeling program, adding two kilns and reworking five others. By 1957, 116 persons worked there. Fabricating Steel Products, Inc. enlarged in 1955, increasing their employees from 25 to 61. The Arkansas Louisiana Gas Refinery became the Arkansas Louisiana Chemical Company and drilled 50-100 wells annually from 1958-1961. They employed about 75 persons.

The Waskom Natural Gas Refinery was enlarged and remodeled in 1956. New gasoline terminals for the Texaco and Mobil oil companies were secured in 1957, adding 17 new families to the community. Waskom's fame became known statewide when Penny Lee Rudd became "Miss Texas" in 1962. She graduated from Waskom High School in 1960.

There was a Ford and Chevrolet business, mercantile stores, and two railroad depots. As it was located on the extreme eastern boundary of Texas, Waskom was the site of numerous filling stations. Thousands of out-of-state drivers, mostly from Louisiana, regularly came to Waskom to fill their vehicles because the gas tax in Texas was lower. The small community boasted 39 gasoline stations, well into the 1960s. This high rate of gas stations per capita brought Waskom recognition in "Ripley's Believe It or Not".

Between 1930 and 1970, as the county lost population and saw its agricultural economy decline, other developments occurred. First, the automobile had revolutionized transportation. Harrison County had only 7,396 motor vehicles registered in 1930. By 1950 the total stood at 12,571, and in 1970 there were 26,912.

Housing continued to be a major issue. A survey in 1959 revealed that 40 employees of Waskom industries had to live in either Marshall or Shreveport due to lack of housing in Waskom.

The Shreveport Times of December 12, 1923 mentioned that the Harrison County Commissioners, meeting in regular session, had discussed building an electric plant in Waskom. The Panola-Harrison Electric Cooperative, begun in 1937, increased its clientele from 332 customers in 1938 to 2,802 in 1950 and 7,416 by 1970. (R. B. Campbell 2016) Southwestern Electric Power Company showed 376 meters in the community in 1954, and 440 meters in 1960.
The timber and petroleum industries that had fueled Waskom's economy in the early part of the 20th century began to dry up. The saw mills closed first, and by the late 1960's, the oil industry began to fail. However, at this same time, the construction and completion of Interstate 20 across the southern edge of the city allowed Waskom to become a "bedroom community" for Shreveport residents who worked in Louisiana, but preferred to live in Texas. This helped to stabilize the population of Waskom.

**Conclusions**

There is a great deal of Waskom's history, if not a majority, that is undocumented, and efforts should be made to correct that short-coming. In regard to a pre-historic presence in the area, there is very limited information, and none of it applies directly to the city. It is reasonable to say people have been living in the Waskom area for 8000 years, back to the early Archaic Period. However, it is quite possible that there was an even earlier Paleo presence dating back 10,000 years. There is no evidence to support the statement because no one has looked.

Since 90% of all archaeological sites are located on private property in Texas, the private property owners in the Waskom area should be encouraged to report any pre-historic or historic sites on their property. These sites can be recorded without any cost, it would not change how the land is being used, and the existence of a site would be kept confidential. Recording such sites would provide the sites with a level of protection from public works projects, such as pipelines which are common in the area. Once bulldozed, all the information that a site could reveal is permanently erased.

This same strategy to preserve Waskom's past should also be applied to Waskom's historic heritage. The location of old original log buildings should be recorded as archaeological sites in order to protect them like the pre-historic sites. For example, where exactly was Powellton located? Can any trace of the original buildings be found?

Mapping and recording out-buildings from the early settlement period, such as stores, slave quarters, barns, etc. would increase our knowledge of settlement patterns in the early days of the Republic of Texas, and beyond. Old original cemeteries and family burials should be documented and unified efforts made to preserve them.
The same can also be said of old roadbeds and railroad beds. Extensive traffic between Marshall and Shreveport could leave behind seemingly minor artifacts that could, in reality, document previously unknown trade routes and explain unknown cultural interactions. For example, what relationship was there between the African-American slave population and the Native American population? Again, no evidence exists because no one has looked.

Due to the overall lack of specific knowledge and available information about historic and pre-historic Waskom, encouragement of local private property owners to have their sites recorded should be considered a priority. Participation would help protect the sites, would not harm the land or the owners, and would benefit the city, county, state, and the scientific community. The longer one waits, the more unique sites are permanently lost from construction and erosion.

In regard to Waskom’s history in the 20th century, there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that Waskom enjoyed two separate “Golden Ages”. One was in the 1920s, and the other in the 1950s.

By the mid-1920s Waskom’s population had increased to about 1,000 persons. A branch of the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, was built, adding to Waskom’s rail traffic. Cotton production did not significantly decline until after the 1920’s, so agriculture was still a major contributor to Waskom’s economy.

The Waterman Saw Mill was started in 1914 and became one of the first industrial payrolls in Waskom. The discovery and development of the Waskom Gas Field around 1924 led to the first shipment of oil from that field being delivered in Marshall on August 25, 1926.

All of this wealth led to a population growth and substantial development of a downtown area in Waskom that became the “Gateway to Texas” on the Dixie Overland Highway. This included grocery stores, variety stores, barber shops, doctor offices and pharmacies, all centered on the post office which was located near the train depot. The First State Bank, Waskom, was opened in 1922. Also in 1922 the first brick school building consisting of 12 classrooms, 2 restrooms, and an auditorium was constructed. A “big, new hall” in 1922 hosted a visiting orchestra.
This “Golden Age” for Waskom is today only represented by a few structures in the downtown area. The prosperity of the community declined along with the nation’s following the Wall Street Crash of 1929, and the following Great Depression.

An argument could be made that Waskom enjoyed a second “Golden Age” in the 1950s, following World War II. The unification of 25 business leaders into the Waskom Chamber of Commerce in 1954 can easily be identified as a turning point for the economy of the city.

Thanks to their efforts, the city built a New City Hall and fire station with modern equipment. The town was surveyed and a city map made. Street lights were installed and street markers placed at street corners. A new local bank was opened which allowed for housing loans in a newly created sub-division.

Local businesses and industries were expanded, including Acme Brick and the Waskom Natural Gas Refinery. There was a Ford and Chevrolet business, mercantile stores, and two railroad depots, not to mention the local revenue from 39 gasoline stations and a first-run movie theater.

Many Texas communities would be proud to identify a single “Golden Age” in their history. The City of Waskom has reason to be proud of their past, which deserves to be promoted, protected, and preserved.


Sandifer, Marcus, interview by Thomas Speir. Public Information Officer, TxDOT Atlanta District (March 18, 2009).


Stringley, Alisa. "Waskom celebrates 100th." The Shreveport Times, April 29, 1994: 3D.


One can not write a history of the early period of the City of Houston without talking about the omnipresent figure of Captain James A. Baker anymore than one could do the same and exclude Jesse H. Jones. A major biography of Jones was provided by Texas A & M Press in 2011, and now in conjunction with the centennial celebration of Rice University, the same press has presented us with the biography of Baker. The brief Foreward to the book is provided by The Captain's grandson, James A. Baker, III, former Secretary of State and Treasury who is also long associated with Houston. Given that this work was written in conjunction with Rice University's centennial, this book is also a biography of the early period of that institution. Baker, of course, as the Executor of the Estate of William Marsh Rice was instrumental in the establishment and development of that institution. Truth be told, it was largely Baker's vision and tenacity that oversaw Rice's dream of a first rate academic institution established in Houston. The tale of Baker's involvement in the settlement of the Rice estate, the legal battles involving challenges largely created by greedy attorneys who may or may not have been involved in the murder of Mr. William Marsh Rice (Captain Baker was convinced he was), is one of the strong points of the book. Ms. Kirkland digs back into the Baker family history to explain the tradition of serving as administrators and executors of estates the wealthy residents of Texas. Additionally, both of the parents of Captain Baker placed a high value on education, a fact that would impact the later development of Rice Institute.

Another strong point of the work early history of James A. Baker. He was born in Huntsville, raised in Huntsville and Houston in the house of his father, Judge James A. Baker, one time Judge of the 7th District Court in Texas, a founder of the Houston Bar Association and the firm that eventu-
ally becomes Baker Botts, LP, one of the foremost law firms in the Texas, if not the entire country. He gained his title of Captain from the Houston Light Guard, the most successful of the fifteen militia companies organized in Houston in the decades following the Civil War.

In the early chapters of the book, Ms. Kirkland details the background of both Judge Baker and Captain Baker, especially with their experience dealing with the estates of deceased clients, serving and Board Members of Austin College, and Trustees of churches, social professional organizations. These fiduciary positions would prepare the Captain for his career overseeing the Rice Estates and endowment of Rice Institute.

While this is an interesting book, at times it feels as if one is reading the society pages of the Houston Chronicle or the Houston Daily Post. A quick check of the Works Consulted section of the book reveals a section entitled "Private Papers, Correspondence, and Interviews." One finds the names of James A. Baker III and several of his relatives, but nothing of the Captain, nor his wife, Mary Alice Graham Baker. Not until three-quarters of the way through the book does Ms. Kirkland reveal that neither the Captain and Mrs. Baker retained any of their personal correspondence or diaries (267) and then another thirty pages before we learn that the two agreed to destroy their mutual correspondence (206). This unquestionably affected her approach to writing a biography of a public, but at the same time, very private man.

The title would imply that this is a joint biography of the Captain and his city, but in reality the focus is more on the Captain, Rice Institute, and his law firm than it is of the city itself. That is not surprising, as the archives and collections at both Rice and Baker Botts were opened to Ms. Kirkland. Still, it early becomes obvious how important that Captain Baker was to the development of the city through his judicious use of the Rice endowment to move the city forward.

The Appendix attached to the book are helpful. The feature a timeline of the important dates in the life of Captain Baker, a chronological list of the firms that preceded the current Baker Botts, and Genealogical Charts for the Captain and Ms. Baker. The only real criticism this reviewer has of those is that the Genealogical charts seems somewhat disjointed and could have been displayed in a system to make them a little more coherent.

Closer editing could have caught several minor errors; archaic and in some
places ostentatious word style, and a few silly mistakes. A prime example of the latter is the statement that the estate of William Marsh Rice was to be divided in "two equal parts," when ninety percent of the estate was to go to what became Rice Institute (148). Still this is an important book. Pair it with the recent William Marsh Rice and his Institute edited by Randall L. Hall, also issued by Texas A & M University Press in conjunction with the Rice University Centennial, or with Steven Fenberg’s Unprecedented Power: Jesse Jones, Capitalism and the Common Good, also from Texas A & M University Press, for a wider view of the driving personalities of Houston’s development. This work should be on the bookshelf of anyone interested in Houston’s Economic and Legal History, Rice University, or the impact of Texas on the country.

George Cooper
Lone Star College

Harold Rich's story of Fort Worth gives us a long overdue, period history of the city's economic development from 1880 through 1918. Packed with well-researched statistics and appropriate financial analysis, Rich's Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown offers readers a truly realistic feel of everyday life in Fort Worth as it began to grow into a major national city.

From humble beginnings as a small remote army camp in 1849, Fort Worth's population by 1880 had grown to over 6,600 based on, according to Rich, "the strength of post-Civil War cattle drives and railroads." All was not roses for Fort Worth in 1880 however. Rich makes the important point that Fort Worth during this time was hindered by a limited industrial base; outside the cattle and wholesale trades, the city's poor overall diversity in economic development made its economy vulnerable to uncontrollable events far away in the nation's east.

The economic world in the United States was undergoing rapid and hard-to-understand change by 1880. Fort Worth and other western cities were no longer immune to the consequences of financial events in faraway New York. As the railroads consolidated and New York's dominance over the nation's finances grew exponentially, Fort Worth endured the same nightmares that haunted the rest of the United States. The Panic of 1893 was a prime example of an event completely out of young Fort Worth's control, but the turmoil the panic created was nonetheless devastating locally. The seldom, if ever before, told story of the efforts of citizens such as Boardman Buckley Paddock and John Peter Smith among others to secure a stabilized economic future for Fort Worth after suffering through the late 19th century make this book a must read.

The first chapter focuses on the railroads' arrival as the "economic critical mass" that formed the initial foundation of Fort Worth's future. Subsequent chapters detail the successes and struggles of the people and industries during the rapidly changing and financially turbulent period before World War I. The book is also full of highly interesting and entertaining discussions of the people who lived there, including those residents of "neighborhoods" such as the infamous "Hell's Half Acre."

According to Rich, by 1900, Fort Worth had the best rail service in Texas. The stockyards handled over 400,000 head of cattle that year. By 1904, total livestock, cows, calves, hogs, sheep, horses, and mules had increased stock-
yard activity to over 1,000,000 head. A large, steady supply of cattle, hogs, and sheep entering Fort Worth’s stockyards was in part due to the city’s reasonable proximity to shipping in the Gulf of Mexico. This steady supply of livestock along with the city’s large rail capacity made Fort Worth the ideal contender for regional packinghouses. In a large part due to the city fathers’ solicitations, national packinghouses Armour and Swift had opened operations in Fort Worth at the turn of the 20th century and by 1904; these two packinghouses alone employed over 2,000 people. Rich does an excellent job in his realistic critical analysis of the early days of Armour and Swift’s growth and their impact on the Fort Worth area’s overall economy.

Underlying the economic story, Rich does an equally expert job in discussing and analyzing the plight of the ordinary citizen, including all of Fort Worth’s citizens, not just the successful and powerful whites. He does fail to include any reference to the contribution of women during this period of Fort Worth’s development, a significant shortcoming of an otherwise thorough perspective of this period. For example, he fails to mention the nationally influential Dr. Mary Ellen Lawson Dabbs, a physician who not only was one of the founders of Texas’ first statewide suffrage group, the Texas Equal Rights Association but also was a writer for the National Economist, the newsletter of the National Farmer’s Alliance. Yet Rich’s insight into the difficulties faced by African and Mexican Americans fills a void in the history of Fort Worth heretofore overlooked in detail.

Especially helpful is Rich’s wonderful use of local newspapers and an often overlooked resource, closer-to-the-period-of-the-story dissertations and theses. Today we are not able to conduct live interviews with the actual participants. Rich understands the tremendous value of dissertations and theses written during or shortly after the book’s time frame as they often include those irreplaceable live interviews with the actual people who shaped Fort Worth.

I strongly recommend Fort Worth: Outpost, Cowtown, Boomtown for everyone. I most especially recommend it for all who live in the Fort Worth area. Harold Rich’s book has given the citizens of “Cow Town” a wonderful opportunity to better understand the community in which they live.

Charles Porter
St. Edwards University
Professor John D. Márquez of Northwestern University’s African American Studies Department and its Latina and Latino Studies Program has crafted a powerful, compelling study of cultural fusion in his *Black-Brown Solidarity: Racial Politics in the New Gulf South*. Márquez analyzes Baytown, Texas and culminates with a recent “activist awakening” by exploited and marginalized communities in response to police violence, echoing the growing protests over racial profiling and the policing of minority neighborhoods today (p. 29). The timing of this 2013 monograph is very prescient and of tremendous interest to scholars who are interested in connecting history to present controversies.

Márquez begins *Black-Brown Solidarity* with an introduction that emphasizes his use of a local, relational sense of cultural hybridity instead of the traditional Latina/o concept of “mestizaje” with its static, genetic implications (p. 16). The author also situates his own experience of having grown up in the area. The first chapter sets down a theoretical and historiographical foundation for the study and the second chapter documents the history of Baytown and its racial politics. The third chapter describes the period of the 1980s and 1990s as one of increasing gang violence and economic hardship, but also as a time of increasing cultural fusion in the daily social interactions of at-risk youth, particularly through rap music. Márquez frames this period as a local manifestation of the crisis of neoliberalism. The book’s final chapter and conclusion center on activism against police violence after an infamous murder in the early 2000s, the author’s family and their experiences with this activist awakening, and his personal motivations of wanting to “crack back at those elites in my hometown who aimed to condemn and criminalize its moral witnesses of 2002” (p. 198).

A unique aspect of *Black-Brown Solidarity* is the author’s insistence upon a high level of theoretical engagement. Márquez’s thoughtful exegesis of post-colonial theory, whiteness scholarship, classic Marxist theory, critical race theory, and other intellectual frameworks transform what in most hands would be a simple, linear story into a fascinating rumination of how race works in America and how people today are dealing with racism through collective action in ways similar and dissimilar to activism of the past. While some may find sifting through the multiple theoretical discussions in each
chapter distracting, this reviewer commends Márquez for not segregating the theory to the introduction. Spreading out the more abstract implications heightens the book’s intellectual rigor and its utility. The only criticism is the frequency with which the author inserts himself into the narrative. In one needless digression, Márquez disrupts an important narrative of Baytown’s experiences with Secession and the Civil War with an anecdote of his having taken the field to the anthem of Dixie as a football player at Baytown’s Robert E. Lee High School (p. 73).

Black-Brown Solidarity’s most important historical contribution is over the whiteness debate. In stark contrast to narratives that African Americans and Latinas/os cannot or will not cooperate or co-exist without violence and tension, Márquez demonstrates with aplomb that this is simply untrue. He trenchantly critiques prominent scholarship by historians Neil Foley and Brian Behnken as intellectually unfair for judging Black-Brown civil rights movements in ways that can only result in failure and without ever defining success: “According to the logic within Behnken’s and Foley’s analyses... all anti-racist movements in the United States, regardless of what activists or forms of activism characterized them, can be declared to be failures, as ineffective, or as failing to generate a kind of wisdom, comprehensive solidarity, and courage among all oppressed peoples that would result in monumental social transformation” (p. 37). While the historians’ debate over the African American and Latina/o civil rights movements—whether they were inherently hampered by petty divisiveness and racism or not—tends to focus on debates over the degree of early civil rights cooperation, no one has interrogated historians’ interpretive assumptions in this fundamental a manner. While Márquez acknowledges respect for these “useful and admirable” works, Black-Brown Solidarity stiffly opposes scholars who would blame oppressed communities for their own oppression as engaging in the damaging, racist tropes of the powerful who seek to keep subaltern communities down (p. 33).

John D. Márquez’s Black-Brown Solidarity: Racial Politics in the New Gulf South is an imaginative, challenging, and intellectually stimulating contribution to the subjects of race, class, cultural hybridity, activism, systematic racial oppression, and the demographic and cultural future of America—all in Baytown, Texas. This is an outstanding work of scholarship.

Carlos Kevin Blanton
Texas A&M University
FROM THE FIRST PAGE THROUGH THE EXCITING FINISH, Dead Stick is an engaging thriller, with no lulls in the action. Frankly, I didn’t want the story to end. I highly recommend Dead Stick as a must-read with one caveat: don’t start the book too late in the evening, or you’ll be up all night.”
—Judge Glen Ashworth (Ret.)

JUST FINISHED IT—WHITE KNUCKLED AND ON THE EDGE of my seat from the close quarters combat in Iraq through the fireworks in the Nolan County Courthouse in west Texas. Jake Conley will take you on one wild ride!”
—Pete Geren, former Secretary of the Army and three-time member of the House of Representatives

WONDERFUL, INTENSE, DRAMATIC, EXCITING AND FUN.”
—Doug Jeanes, Executive Director of Cavanaugh Flight Museum

A LEGAL THRILLER WITH MILITARY GRIT. Steve skillfully puts you in the cockpit. The flying scenes made my pulse race; I could smell the metal, sweat and jet fuel again. He does a masterful job of taking you there.”
—Michael Rutledge, 28-year-old veteran, Navy S.E.A.L., Army Special Operations Master Aviator, President, Stearman Restorer’s Association

STEVE DEWOLF’S DEBUT NOVEL, Dead Stick, is a barn burner. A thriller equal to Grisham and Turow, it is a page turner you can’t put down until you find out what happens next.”
—Rod Wetsel, The Sweetwater Reporter
"Solid old-fashioned story telling blended with a true crime mystery make this a throw back treat in the moody Chandler tradition. Check it out."
—Joe R. Lansdale

"Judge Sam Griffith's _Rendezvous With Death_ truly captures the culture of death and destruction that surrounds much of the drug culture. Rendezvous accurately reflects the violence and dangers of the drug culture on rural America as the drug pushers and drug labs spread their destructive tentacles across the country. And _Rendezvous With Death_ is an exciting read, as Noah Starr chases drug pushers across rural east Texas."
—Sheriff J.B. Smith, Smith County 1976-2012

"Gripping, realistic and true to the time when east Texas was referred to as the Drug Lab Capital. The locations brought back memories. Well intertwined story that happens to this day even though the players’ names change along with the cities and counties. Dallas and east Texas have had connections in the Drug Society for years dating back to even Bootlegging era. Judge Sam Griffith captured Drug Labs and the violence associated with the drug business along with the effects it has on families and innocent children that are drug into it by the glamour, partying and money associated with it, that results in death, destruction and mayhem."
—Bobby Van Ness, former narcotics investigator
Institutional Members

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COMMERCIAL BANK OF TEXAS
CHEROKEE COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
PANOLA COLLEGE, DR. GREGORY POWELL
ANGELINA COLLEGE, PRESIDENT LARRY PHILLIPS
TRINITY VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CITY OF EMORY
TEXAS FORESTRY ASSOCIATION, MR. RON HUFFORD
START FOUNDATION, JENNIFER HUDSON CONNORS
HARRISON COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
SAN JACINTO MUSEUM OF HISTORY
EAST TEXAS HERITAGE MUSEUM/CAMP FORD HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
BILL O'NEAL
HISPANIC HERITAGE CENTER, RUDI RODRIGUEZ
SMITH COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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EAST TEXAS OIL MUSEUM, JOE WHITE
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PEGGY WRIGHT
SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY, DR. JIM GAERTNER, PRESIDENT
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IN THIS ISSUE:

★ Neil Allen
★ Carlos K. Blanton
★ George Cooper
★ Betsy Friauf
★ Michael Phillips
★ Gary L. Pinkerton
★ Charles Porter
★ Thomas Speir