



DALLAS COUNTY PIONEER ASSOCIATION

History Lives Here!
2025

SUMMER

Next Meeting: 6/05/25 at 7pm



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy to announce that we've added several new members since our last newsletter in March! It's great to see the group grow and to meet new people that love and appreciate the pioneers that first settled Dallas County. New people are finding us on [Instagram](#), and the recent write up DCPA received in [East Dallas Magazine](#) also brought people to us. Our mission is to promote that history and preserve the pioneers' stories for future generations.

BIRD'S FORT FIELD TRIP

A big thank you to everyone who joined us for our recent field trip to the historic site of Bird's Fort on Saturday, May 11th. DCPA Historian M.C. Toyer led us on an enlightening tour of the grounds, which remain undeveloped and open to exploration by historians and history lovers alike. For



most attendees—including Jeanette Pritchett and her sister—it was their first time **seeing the site** of the stockade where the **Beemans, Gilberts, Silkwoods**, and other pioneers **took shelter** during the harsh winter of 1841 in the untamed wilderness of the Three Forks area of North Texas. Among them was Susan Hines Berryhill, Vice President of the Van Alstyne Historical Society, whose 3rd great-grandfather, James Pinckney Dumas, was a prominent pioneer surveyor in early Texas and even surveyed for John Neely Bryan himself—making her visit to Bird's Fort especially meaningful. She was very excited to attend. We'll plan a return trip at a future date and focus on letting youngsters participate and lead some (or all) of the tour.

Where would you like to go for our next field trip? Grapevine Springs in Coppell where an important 1843 treaty with nine Indian tribes was signed?

Or maybe the site of the California Crossing on the Trinity River used for decades by pioneers passing through Dallas on their way to the west coast? Or maybe another historical site? Send us an email at info@dallaspioneer.org with your thoughts and suggestions.

EARLY PIONEER DOCUMENTS, DEEDS, AND OTHER MATERIALS

The past few weeks, DCPA's Mike Thompson has been sharing wonderful examples of pioneer-era documents from his extensive collection on our Facebook page. If you don't already follow us there, please like our page and contribute to the conversations. Like most of you, I'm fascinated by hand-written land grants and deeds and seeing the signatures of those who came before us is endlessly inspiring!

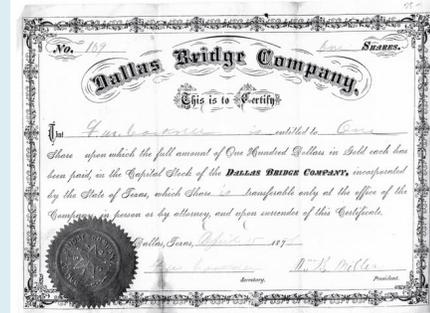
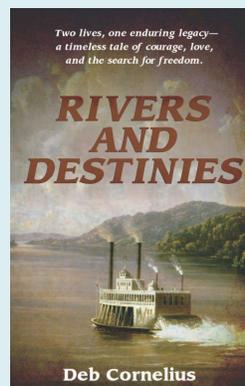


Figure 99. "Gold" Stock Certificate for Dallas Bridge Company, Dallas, 1881. Roads, canals and bridges were crucial to the commercial growth of early Texas. After the Houston and Texas Central Railroad reached Dallas in 1872, the regional commercial center experienced a rapid period of expansion. The rail line ran to the Indian Territory south of the Red River. Trinity River ferryman Alexander Cockrell chartered the Dallas Bridge Company in 1868. Sarah Houston Cockrell carried the project to completion after her husband's death. The bridge was completed in 1872 as a connector between East and West Texas. Mrs. Cockrell sold the bridge to the city of Dallas in 1875. The illustrated certificate, dated 1881, was to her son and business partner Frank Cockrell. At that time, the company had evolved into a real estate investment entity, although it retained the "Bridge Company" corporate form.

NEXT MEETING - Thursday, June 5th at 7pm

Our guest speaker is DCPA member and author Deb Cornelius whose novel "Rivers and Destinies" about Dallas pioneer Captain Mabel Gilbert was published to much acclaim in February. She'll have copies of the book available for sale at the meeting and will also be autographing copies for us. She's been making the rounds of local historical societies and we're delighted to have her with us at our next meeting. If you're unable to attend our next meeting, Deb's novel is available for purchase on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) in hard copy, paperback, and Kindle versions.



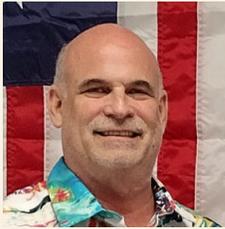
Rivers and Destinies book



Deb Cornelius

If you're a first-time guest or simply a new member that's never attended one of our quarterly meetings, please join us for dinner at 6:00p prior to the 7:00p meeting. Let us know you're a first-timer and enjoy a complimentary meal on us! Please **make your dinner reservation** by clicking the red button below, or on our website [dallaspioneer.org](https://www.dallaspioneer.org), or by voice mail at 972-260-9334 and mention that you're a guest. You can also email Vice President Paul Ridenour at vp@dallaspioneer.org that you're a guest.

[Make a Dinner Reservation](#)



Unexpected Connections: A New Member's Remarkable Family Ties

By Paul Ridenour

At our most recent meeting, we welcomed a new member, **Carla (Martin) Smith**, who shared that she hoped to explore her family's genealogy someday. I offered to help—and the discoveries quickly unfolded.

Carla and I actually go back further than we realized. We both attended Bryan Adams High School, and over the years I've served as the photographer for many of the school's reunions (Classes of '65 through '86) and several Christmas parties. Interestingly, Mike Judd—who met Carla in 2000—also graduated from Bryan Adams, but with Carla's youngest sister, whom I also knew.



As I began looking into Carla's family history, I discovered that her great-grandmother was a 'Dennis.' This immediately caught my attention because my college roommate was also a 'Dennis' - David Dennis, whose first cousin once removed is Vivian Dennis-Montzingo, former Dean of Mathematics at Eastfield College. I met Vivian years ago at a Sons of the American Revolution meeting.

To my surprise, Carla's second great-grandparents—Zebedee Arnold Dennis and Zona Adeline (Nicholson) Dennis—were also the grandparents of Vivian Dennis-Montzingo. The resemblance between Carla and Vivian is striking, and I was pleased to connect them via email.



Another fascinating discovery: Carla's 2nd great-grandfather, Samuel Allen Jones, came from Giles County, Tennessee—the same place my own 4th and 5th great-grandfathers, James and Jeremiah Jones (both War of 1812 veterans), once lived. While the Jones surname is notoriously difficult to trace without strong documentation, I have a 178-page Jones family history compiled by a cousin.

Samuel Allen Jones isn't listed in it, but I still believe there's a strong possibility that Carla and I are distant cousins.

Finally, Carla's family tree includes a dramatic story that has been passed down over generations. Her great-grandfather, Robert W. Allsbrooks, got into a serious dispute with his eldest son, Lee (age 26), over mules and land division. During the argument, Robert struck Lee with a rake. Lee then shot and killed his father with a shotgun. He later claimed self-defense and was released.

Carla and Vivian met in person for the first time on May 21st, 2025.

Dallas County Pioneer Association was recently informed of an unexpected situation regarding Haught Cemetery. Linda Haught Ortega, a descendant of Samuel A. Haught, reported a relative in Arizona received a Civil Citation from Dallas County Tax Court stating that back taxes were now due on the cemetery. Knowing that the property has been deeded as a cemetery and tax statements had never been received in the past, the recipient thought the citation was fraudulent and took no action. The recipient later showed the citation to Linda.

Through a series of errors the Dallas Central Appraisal District had **removed the cemetery exemption status** from the property in 2003, and thus it was considered taxable property. Since a deadline for the recipient of the citation to respond had passed, taxing entities moved forward to acquire the property for unpaid taxes. The property is currently the focus of a Citation for a Tax **Foreclosure Lawsuit**. Linda has taken action and has applied for cemetery tax exemption to be restored to the property and is asking that the tax bill be forgiven. The status and outcome of the Haught Cemetery, Civil Tax Suit will be decided in the 160th District Court of Dallas County with the Judicial Officer: Carl Ginsberg. Resolution is not expected for several months.

Once the cemetery regains cemetery property tax exemption Linda plans to pursue restoring the grave markers, caring for the cemetery, and obtaining a Texas Historical Marker. More information on the history, location, and condition of Haught Cemetery is available at the [Dallas Genealogical Society's website](#).

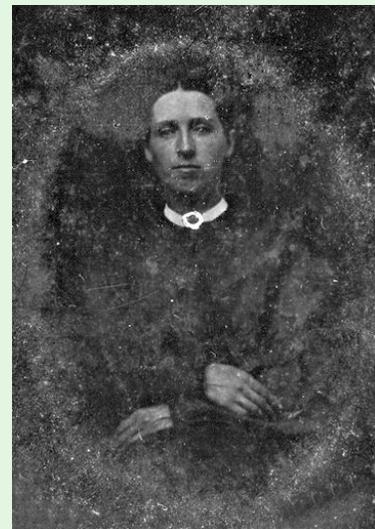
These cemeteries need your help in order to be preserved. Please see more on our [Events page](#).

FUTURE EVENTS

Grave marking ceremony for **Private Eli Merrell**, veteran of the War of 1812, will be held on Sunday, May 25, 2025 at 3:00 PM at [Merrell Cemetery](#). For more information, contact DCPA Vice President [Paul Ridenour](#) or visit the [event description](#) on our [Events page](#).

AUDELIA FEST

Congratulations to our friends at the Dallas Municipal Archives on their recent historical symposium at the Dallas Public Library's Audelia Road branch which they called "Audelia Fest". City archivist John Slate shared information about the early history of the Lake Highlands area along with the pioneer families such as the Goforths, Bonners, McCrees, Jacksons, and Mosses who farmed the "high prairie" just north of the White Rock Creek Valley. Attendees learned all about Ellen Ardelia Jackson West (1853-1899) for whom the "Ardelia" community at the intersection of today's Forest Lane and Audelia Road was named.



This photo shows a young Ardelia at age 19 in 1872. Over time, the

pronunciation and spelling changed from Ardelia to Audelia and a fried chicken restaurant today occupies the site where the Ardelia store and post office were located until 1904 on the southeast corner of Forest and Audelia. This historical symposium will return again in 2026 and we'll share details as they become available.



Please Join Us
FOR THE RETURN OF OLD TIGE
TO THE DALLAS FIREFIGHTER'S MUSEUM

Saturday, April 12
at 12:00pm

AT THE
DALLAS FIREFIGHTER'S MUSEUM
3801 PARRY AVE
DALLAS, TX 75226

We are thrilled to announce the return of *Old Tige*, the museum's namesake, to the Dallas Firefighter's Museum.

After an extensive restoration to its original condition, *Old Tige* is ready to take its rightful place once again. The steam engine will arrive at the Museum pulled by a team of horses, just as it was in 1884.

We invite you to join us for this significant event and celebrate a cherished piece of Dallas Fire Department history.

PARKING IS AVAILABLE AT FAIR PARK ACROSS FROM THE WOMEN'S BUILDING IN LOTS 2A & 2B

DALLAS FIREFIGHTERS MUSEUM RESTORATION OF "OLD TIGE"

We're very excited to announce that the centerpiece of the Dallas Firefighter's Museum is back at the museum after a lengthy (and expensive) restoration. The first mechanical steam pumper acquired by the DFD was an 1884 Ahrens horse-drawn pumper that served the department well for decades before motorized equipment became available. Nicknamed "Old Tige" this old pumper was beloved by our grandparents and great-grandparents' generations. Restored to

its brassy, shiny glory, please visit the museum soon and see "Old Tige" in person! Hours and admission prices are on the museum's website at www.dallasfiremuseum.com.

GLENN ROGERS' ARTICLE IN DMN

A regular contributor to The Dallas Morning News, Dr. Glenn Rogers of Palo Pinto County, Texas created quite a stir in a recent piece published in the News where he proudly proclaimed that his great-great-great grandmother Charity Morris Gilbert named John Neely Bryan's new town "Dallas" shortly after her 1842 arrival via the Trinity River from Bird's Fort upstream. The question for whom the city of Dallas is named for has been debated for 175 years and historians still disagree to this day about this unknowable topic. Although Charity Morris Gilbert was the first female to settle in Dallas (and her son James Morris Gilbert the first baby born in the new village), Dr. Rogers' theory is interesting, but ultimately unknowable. Although copyright protections prevent us from re-publishing his article in full, paid subscribers can access it online. We'll reach out to Dr. Rogers (a medical doctor in Palo Pinto) and provide supporting information as it becomes available.

Rogers: My great-great-great-grandmother named Dallas

Research and family lore put the contributing columnist's family at the center of Dallas history.



By **Glenn Rogers**
Contributing Columnist

Mar. 8, 2025 | Updated just now | 5 min. read



An undated photo of John Neely Bryan Cabin in downtown Dallas. (Joe Laird / Staff Photographer)

DMN article by Glenn Rogers

W.H. FLIPPEN: From Ross to Greenwood

By Brian Gunn

When W.H. Flippen arrived in Dallas in 1880, he quickly became a force in the city's financial landscape. Teaming up with French emigrant J. Bertrand Adoue and Galveston banker Joseph Lobit, Flippen co-founded the banking firm of Flippen, Adoue & Lobit.



The trio commissioned noted architect James Flanders to design their firm's headquarters at the southwest corner of Elm and Poydras Streets.



A year later, Flippen again enlisted Flanders—this time to design a stately home at 281 Ross Avenue, nestled between Oleander (now Ervay) and Masten (now St. Paul). His address placed him among some of Dallas's most prominent residents: Jules Schneider next door, Mrs. Caruth on the other side, John T. Trezevant across the street, and Alfred Belo down the block.

In addition to his banking career, Flippen served three terms as Dallas City Treasurer, balancing civic duty with business acumen. Tragically, his life was cut short at age 52 due to heart complications. His obituary painted a poignant picture:

“For several months preceding his death, he accustomed himself to sleep in a sitting posture, the peculiarity of his disease preventing him from lying down, and he frequently remarked to his friends that he was living by the clock, expecting the last day at any moment—but always maintaining a cheerful disposition.”

W.H. Flippen now rests at [Greenwood Cemetery](#), among the city's early pioneers.

A Dose of History: The story behind Skillern's

Many longtime Texans still remember the name Skillern's—a trusted chain of drugstores that served communities across North Texas for generations. But few may know the story of the man behind the brand, James Arthur Skillern, and the family legacy that helped build a regional retail icon.



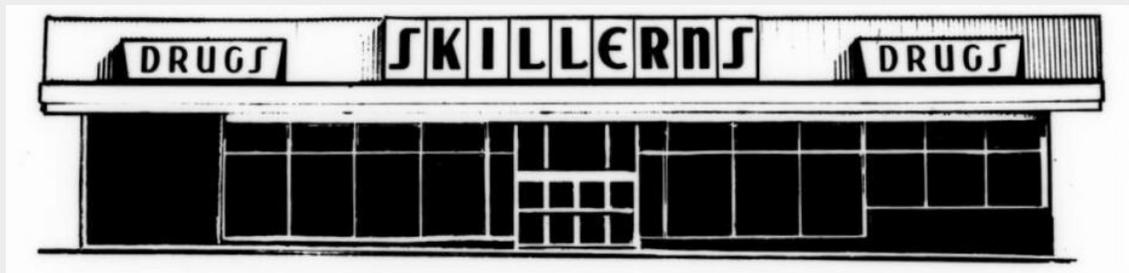
James Arthur Skillern was born on May 29, 1856, in Pikesville, Tennessee, to William Franklin “Frank” and Sarah Ann Henninger Skillern. When James was just three, his father passed away. His mother later married William M. Skillern, a first cousin of her late husband. By his twenties, James had moved to Denton County, Texas, and was working as a clerk. The 1880 census recorded him as a single man living in a boarding house.

In 1882, James married Cora McCants, but their union was heartbreakingly brief—Cora died that same year at age 20. A few years later, James married Mary James Edwards, with whom he had nine children: William Arthur, Frank Lloyd, Edna Cora (Cofer), Lida (Cone), Rae Edwards, twins Zula (Folsom) and Zola (Ferguson), Mary Evelyn (Napier), and Jeanne (Hancock). Many of these family members would later play a role in the growing business.

According to a 1960 article in the Grand Prairie Daily News-Texan, James opened his first store in Lewisville in 1885, operating out of a modest wood-frame building. A decade later, the company expanded into Dallas, opening a downtown store near the courthouse in 1895. Another prominent downtown location followed at 1812 Commerce Street, not far from the Interurban Building. Over time, the Skillern’s name became a fixture in neighborhoods across Dallas and Fort Worth, with beautifully appointed stores in Lakewood and Highland Park among the standouts.

The company’s success caught the eye of larger retailers. In 1965, with 45 locations under its name, Skillern’s was acquired by Zale Corporation. Fifteen years later, Zale sold the chain to Revco, which continued operations until Revco itself was acquired by CVS in 1997. Eventually, all Skillern’s locations were rebranded, bringing an end to the name but not the legacy.

James Arthur Skillern passed away on December 29, 1914, at the age of 58. His wife Mary survived him by twenty years, passing on July 15, 1935. They are both laid to rest in Oak Cliff Cemetery in Dallas County—a fitting resting place for a couple whose family helped shape everyday life for so many Texans.



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