ARLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter - FEB-MAR 2019

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(at the Historic Fielder House)
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Web — www.historicalarlington.org
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Hours: Fielder House: Tues. through Sat. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (or by appointment)
Knapp Heritage Park: Sat. & Sun. 1- 4 p.m.

Stories from the
Arlington Archives !

Early Electric Service in Arlington

(This article appeared in the *Citizen-Journal 's* 75th anniversary issue, February 1972)

The early history of electricity in Arlington is a "corny" story. It seems that the first light plant had to burn corn cobs to generate the electricity. It was in 1904 that a corn-shelling plant, owned by A. W. Collins, provided Arlington with its first electricity. While other cities got electric service from ice plants or gins, Arlington went the corn route.

At dusk, when the day's shelling work was finished, the belt of the steam engine was switched over to an electric dynamo to supply light for about 50 downtown stores, offices, and a few homes.

For fuel, the corn-shelling plant burned cobs and shucks, but in the season when the pile of cobs ran low, the firemen mixed lignite coal with refuse from the shelter and produced steam for the engine. The corn-shelling plant was located on a creek close to South and Center Streets.

Electric service in 1904 was only for lighting and the plant started operating at dusk and ran until 11 p.m. on weekdays. On Saturday, the plant chugged along until midnight. In the winter, the plant started early in the morning—

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Reviews of Books on Texas History
by Denise Youngblood

Star-Telegram, *Fort Worth Memories: The Early Years, a Pictorial History* (Fort Worth: Star-Telegram/Pediment Publishing, 2018).

Bronson Dorsey, *Lost, Texas: Photographs of Forgotten Buildings* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2018).

Is a picture really worth a thousand words? As these two photographic histories demonstrate, it depends on the photographer. Photographic histories always combine words with pictures, but the number of words can range from short captions to lengthy discourses. The classic Texas photographic history, W.D. Smithers' *Chronicles of the Big Bend: A Photographic Memoir of Life on the Border* (1977),

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Early Electric Service in Arlington (continued from page 1)

around 4:30 or 5 a.m. and ran until daylight so early risers could have light.

There were no electric meters in 1904 and customers merely paid so much for each light they had in their store, office and/or home. These were small lamps that provided only a little more light than an oil lamp.

In 1906, A. W. Collins, with W. C. Weeks, W. M. Dugan and Col. Spruance invested $10,000 to provide the city with a larger electric plant. They built an addition to the corn-shelling plant to house a new generating unit and extended wires to parts of the residential area. The plant operated at 220 volts direct current and all lamp bulbs were 220 volts.

The first full-time electric service enjoyed by Arlington citizens was available in 1913 when the electric system was purchased by the Northern Texas Traction Co., whose high voltage power lines ran through Arlington supplying power for the Dallas—Fort Worth Interurban line. The traction company rebuilt the electric distribution lines in the city. They supplied electricity at a 25 cycle alternating current, 115 volts. The old 220 volt light bulbs wouldn't burn with this lower voltage, so the company exchanged 115 volt bulbs for the old ones.

With high-line electric service available, Arlington had sufficient power for the first time for local industries. The 25-cycle service, though ideal for Interurban and street car operation as well as factories' electric motors, produced a continuous flickering in electric lights in the home. The first large user of the electric power in Arlington was W. A. Bowen, owner of the *Arlington Journal*, which used a large motor to run his big press.

In 1926, a new high line brought Arlington 60-cycle electric service, and this eliminated the flickering problem of 25 cycle service, but created another problem. The company spent much time and money exchanging fan motors and other motor-driven appliances for customers with this new 60-cycle service.

The Texas Electric Service Company bought the electric properties in 1930 and at last Arlington had what had become the standard type of electric service. .

Prior to 1917, the price was 15 cents per kilowatt-hour and the minimum monthly bill was $1.50. In 1917, it dropped to 12 cents per kilowatt-hour for the first 25 kilowatt-hours, with the balance of kilowatt-hours at 10 cents each. The minimum monthly bill was $1.00. In 1940, electric rates in Arlington started at a top price of 5 cents per kilowatt-hour, and after the minimum had been used the rate dropped to 2 cents per kilowatt-hour.

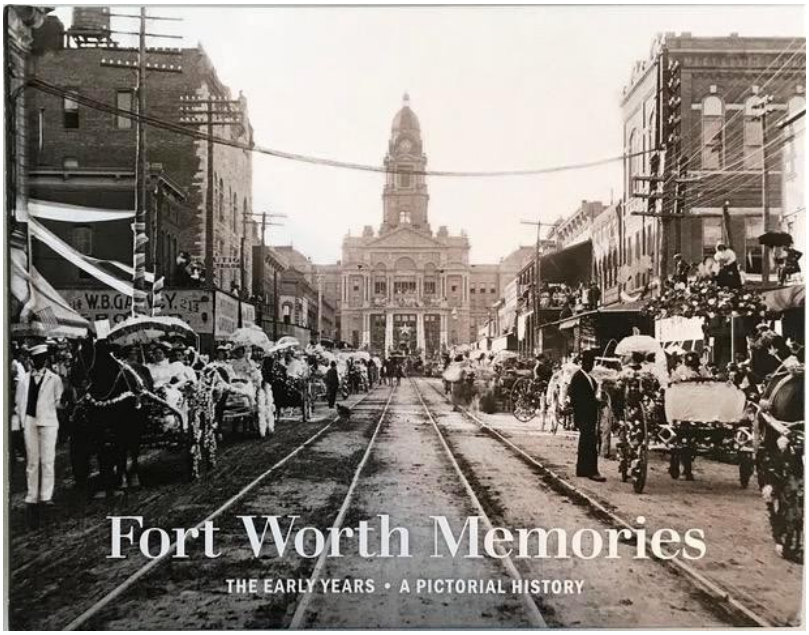
Arlington Garden Club

Find them on Facebook -
"Garden club– Arlington TX"

Thanks, Arlington Garden Club, for your volunteers' contributions to the upkeep and beautification of the grounds of the historic Fielder House!!

Fort Worth Memories and Lost, Texas (continued from page 1)

combined dozens of photos that Smithers took from 1916 to the end of the Great Depression with detailed anecdotes from his own experiences for a 50-50 split of words and pictures. *Fort Worth Memories* and *Lost Texas* deploy far fewer words than *Chronicles of the Big Bend*, but with varying degrees of success.



***Fort Worth Memories* takes the extreme minimalist approach, offering only the briefest of captions, without an interpretive essay to analyze the evolution of Fort Worth in the first four decades of the last century. Most of the photos come from the archives of the *Star-Telegram*, which are, interestingly, housed here in Arlington in the UTA Libraries' Special Collections. To add diversity, the project curator, Bob Reitz, also turned to the Fort Worth Jewish Archive, the North Fort Worth Historical Society, and a few family collections.**

The photographs are organized thematically in eight chapters: street scenes, agriculture and technology, public service, transportation, school and education, community, commerce, and recreation and celebration, with each chapter ordered chronologically from the 1890s through the 1930s (mainly the 1920s and 1930s). These early photojournalists were, quite frankly, not very talented, and they were further disadvantaged by the limitations of early camera technology. Their pictures are almost always badly lit, low contrast long shots that show what things and people looked like without imparting any sense of the lives behind the images. This is especially obvious in the "people pictures," which are obviously staged group shots, with the subjects staring unsmiling straight at the camera.

What is most interesting about *Fort Worth Memories* is the difference between the photos from the newspaper's archives and those drawn from other collections. The *Star-Telegram*'s photographers focused to a considerable degree on Anglo men as subjects, although Anglo women gradually appear in increasing numbers by the 1920s. Quite appropriately, the curator sought to augment his selection by seeking out pictures from Fort Worth communities that were not represented in the *Star-Telegram* archives, like Jews and African Americans (but no Tejanos). This is a useful reminder of the limits of historical sources. Those early Fort Worth photojournalists were recording what the newspaper believed was important, to be sure, but their pictures should not be mistaken for a complete record of life in Fort Worth at the time.

***Lost, Texas* is a much better example of a photographic history. Texas architect and professional architectural photographer Bronson Dorsey traveled the state's back roads for nearly a decade, visiting 93 small towns and ghost towns looking for abandoned or repurposed historic buildings to photograph. This is an original approach to photographic history that succeeds brilliantly due to the high quality of Dorsey's pictures (he definitely possesses an artist's eye) and to the short explanatory text that accompanies each shot. In researching the history of his ruins, Dorsey tells the story not just of buildings, but of places and times nearly "lost"; when**

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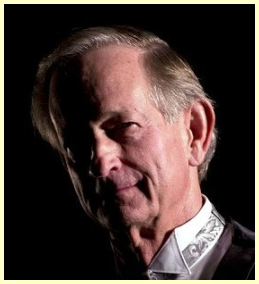
Arlington on Tap gets artsy, historical and downright fossilized

Ever eclectic, Arlington on Tap continues its 2019 season with a rare mix of speakers and topics

- **An actor/director/playwright muses about all the things that can go wrong on stage and still be funny. Or not.**
- **The world's top authority on Arlington's legendary Top O' Hill Casino refuels a two-decade-old war of wills between pulpit-pounding preacher J. Frank Norris and gambling gangsters Fred Browning and Bennie "Cowboy" Binion.**
- **More than 2,000 fossils from the Archosaur dig in far north Arlington now reside in the Perot Museum, a collection that includes some newly discovered species. This Tap will be a show-and-tell.**
- **A one-time New York Metropolitan opera singer lost his high notes (okay, so he was only 11 at the time), decided to become a newspaper columnist instead – in Texas – and relates how he cleverly reconstructed himself into a Lone Star persona.**

Got your attention yet? Good. Tap is courtesy of Downtown Arlington Management, the Arlington Historical Society, Arlington Proud and Arlington Today Magazine, here's the upcoming schedule. Save the dates. All "Taps" run 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.



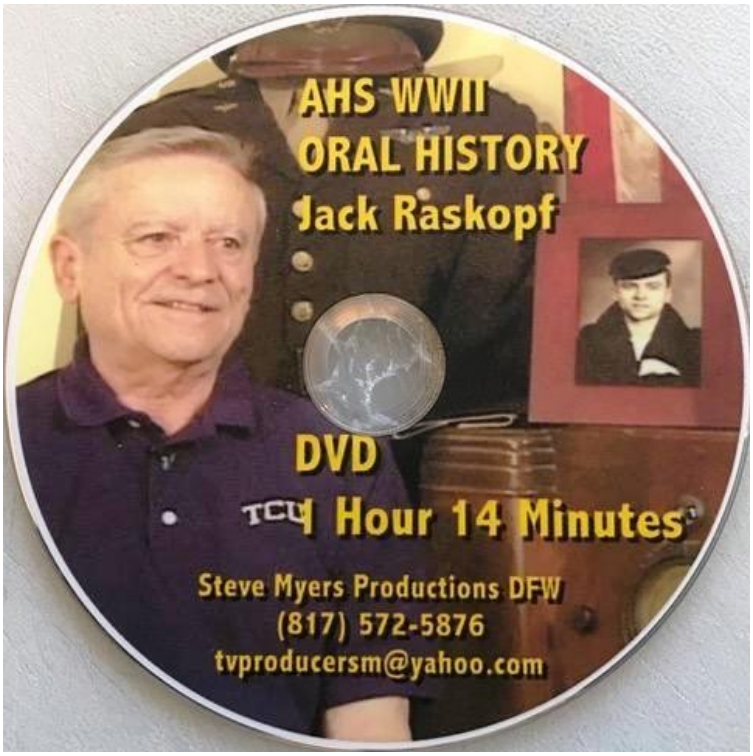
Feb. 12 – Kit Hussey has acted on stage, in films and on TV. He's also a playwright and director. He notes that things do go wrong on occasion and he's got a lifetime of personal anecdotes to prove it. Catch him at J. Gilligan's Bar and Grill, 400 E. Abram St.

March 19 (A week later than usual because of spring break) – Vickie Bryant has made it her life's work to resurrect not only the legend of the famed Top O' Hill Casino, but also of all those forces who battled mightily (and usually without success) against it. Maverick's Bar and Grill, 601 E. Main.

April 9 – Perot Museum's famed paleontologist Dr. Ron Tykoski unveils a dazzling story of Arlington's neighborhood as it was 90 million years ago in the first public "reveal" of the most astonishing discoveries related to 2,000 fossils recovered from a north Arlington dig – including a crocodile big enough to munch on a hippo. Hear it at Legal Draft, 500 E. Front St.

May 14 – Dallas Morning News consumer affairs columnist Dave Lieber is a busy lad. He also writes books and plays – the latest being "Amon," a one-man play about legendary Star-Telegram Publisher Amon G. Carter. He's also a humorist who'll be talking about his transition from New Yorker to Stetson-wearing Texan – no easy task but his Texan accent is sort of close. Division Brewing, 506 E. Main Street.

"The Greatest Generation": Arlington Veterans Remember World War II
Part 2 of 2
by Denise Youngblood



One of the eight WWII DVDs

The recollections of the non-combatants varied a great deal, depending on their jobs and where they were stationed. E.G. Nation, the airplane mechanic, spent the war on American airbases in southern Italy, repairing damaged planes. He recalled the tedium, especially the lack of news about what was going at the fronts. D-Day was for him a personal tragedy, rather than a cause for celebration, as his brother was killed in the invasion. Shirley Foster was an MP, first in North Africa (where he marveled at seeing camels) and then in Italy, but always well behind the lines. Claude Horan, the medic, traveled more than any of the others: from North Africa to southern Italy, from Italy to France, from France to Germany, following the front lines and serving in mobile field hospitals. He recalled his frequent sentry duty (where he was given only two bullets for his rifle), supervising Italian POWs in the patient mess hall, evacuating a hospital in Salerno, and digging latrines in France. His unit was just behind the lines at the Battle of the Bulge; one of his most vivid recollection as they entered Germany was finding an abandoned German hospital, filled with corpses.

Jack Raskopf, the naval radio operator who was a whiz at Morse code, had the best stories of any of the non-combatants (like Fred Bondurant, his memory was remarkable)—and very lucky timing. Raskopf was supposed to be headed for Cherbourg, France when he was mistakenly transferred to a landing craft loaded with tanks headed for Utah Beach a few days after D-Day, landing on June 9, 1944. He quickly realized this was not Cherbourg! He made his way to the lieutenant who seemed to be the "traffic officer" on the beach, telling him, "I'm not supposed to be here," whereupon the lieutenant deadpanned, "Me neither." Hearing that Raskopf was "lost" didn't motivate the lieutenant to help (he had more urgent matters to attend to), so Raskopf camped out on Utah beach for *two months*, foraging for food, until another officer took pity on him and put him on a Coast Guard cutter headed for Cherbourg, where Raskopf's ship was stationed. He had some explaining to do! The only time he was actually in danger was when his ship was shelled near the Channel Islands, which Raskopf recounted as sounding like "marbles falling on the deck." Raskopf's luck held out: in late July 1945, he was told he would be transferred to the Pacific, but before that could happen, the bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the war was finally over. Claude Horan was also supposed to be sent from Germany to Japan, but there were not enough ships—and then the war ended.

The two interviewees stationed in the Pacific, Jack Vaughan and Herbert Harrison, recalled important aspects of wartime service that rarely make it into the history books. Both of them faced months of

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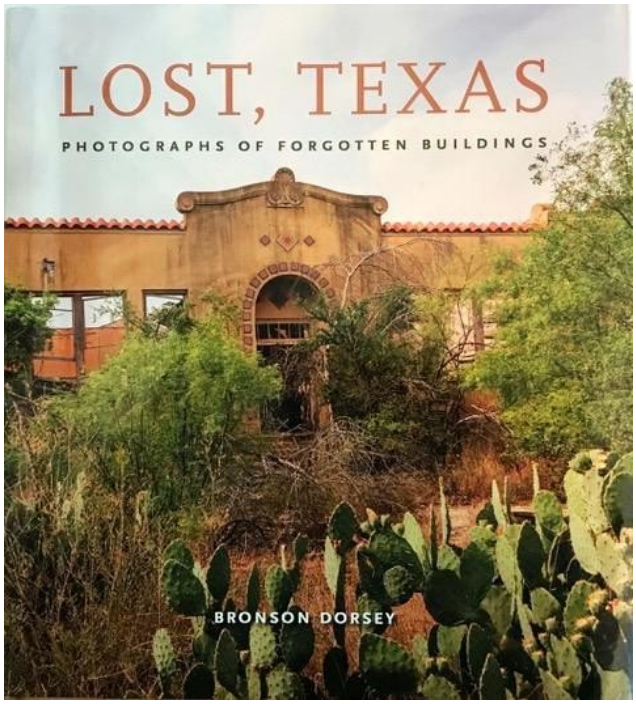
Fort Worth Memories and Lost, Texas (continued from page 3)



his journey reaches its end in Westbrook with an image of the long-shuttered Westbrook Gin, the reader has a good sense of Texas' once vibrant rural economy that supported a diverse array of businesses, schools, hospitals, hotels, and churches before World War II and the postwar migration to the big cities. Dorsey is also very good at ferreting out interesting bits of Texas trivia, such as how hard it could be to win the approval of the US Postmaster General for a town's name. Hence the town once known variously as Caprock, TXL, and Strawberry, is now Notrees, Texas because the postmaster wanted the name to reflect a geographic feature, in this case "no trees."

***Lost, Texas* is organized by the state's six geographic regions, which facilitates organizing road trips to see the buildings that inspired Dorsey. He did not include any from Tarrant County, but there are several in North Texas within a two-hour drive of Arlington that serve as good illustrations of his method. For example, when US 287 was built to pass by Decatur, Emmett F. Boyd was inspired to erect one of the first motels in the state in 1931, the Texas Tourist Camp (also known as the Petrified Wood Station). Eagle Ford, settled in 1844 and now part of Dallas, was once a prosperous, independent "company town," home to the Southwestern States Portland Cement Company, which supplied housing and other amenities for its workers. Dorsey found what remains of the school the company built in 1916; the Eagle Ford School had an infamous alumna, Bonnie Parker of "Bonnie and Clyde" fame. Strawn, home to the ruins of Zim's Tourist Court, the Bankhead Hotel, and Zim's Quality Beverages plant, was dominated in its heyday by the Strawn Mining Company, after a rich vein of bituminous coal was discovered nearby. Finally, the sole surviving building of the long-defunct Grayson College can be found in Whitewright, once a bustling center of cotton production and the hometown of Kay Kimbell, a high school dropout who founded the Beatrice Milling Company in Whitewright in the early 1900s. This was the first of many businesses in Kimbell's empire, generating the great wealth that enabled him to fund the Kimbell Art Foundation in Fort Worth in 1935.**

In sum, I learned a great deal about Texas history from this fascinating and handsomely produced book. By the time I finished reading it, I was ready to hit the road, to take my own pictures.

To Be Reviewed in the Next Issue:

Next up is Angela Bosworth, *Women in Texas History* (2018). If you have suggestions for other recent books on Texas history to be reviewed in the newsletter, please send them to us at denise.youngblood@uvm.edu.

Greatest Generation– from page 5

isolation, loneliness, and grinding boredom, Harrison on Guam and Vaughan on American Samoa. Harrison served in a security detail supervising Japanese POWs helping American troops build barracks (he also performed this construction labor). Vaughan endured 22 months on Samoa. Assigned to operate anti-aircraft guns, he waited for a Japanese attack that never came. He recalled that morale was so low that some men deliberately exposed themselves to be bitten by mosquitos in hopes of contracting malaria and being sent home.

Neither Vaughan nor Harrison formed close friendships. This was quite typical for the US wartime military, despite what we see in the movies. Instead they really looked forward to the letters from home, even though everyone complained about the censorship. Recreational opportunities were limited to playing ping-pong and poker, shooting craps and watching an occasional old movie. Neither ever saw a USO troop show; they did not tour the countryside on leave or fraternize with the natives. (The men serving in Europe also reported little downtime, except for E.G. Nation, who had one leave and went to Rome).

What all the men shared, whether combatant or non-combatant, in Europe or the Pacific, was their amused contempt for the food: Spam, of course, and dried everything else, with very little variation. Jack Raskopf recalled an anecdote about how much he had been looking forward to a special dessert of canned pineapple, when his "stupid" captain got on the intercom and cheerfully informed the sailors that they were headed into heavily mined waters and that half of them were likely to be blown to smithereens. Nothing happened, but Raskopf not surprisingly lost his appetite for the pineapple.

<u>Coming Home</u>

Demobilization could be a convoluted process, and in most cases, the soldiers' families had no idea their loved ones were coming home until they showed up at the door. Jack Vaughan returned to the US from Samoa in 1944; before he was demobilized in 1946, he was stationed in Camp Lejeune, Corpus Christi, Camp Pendleton, Yerba Buena Island, and Klamath Falls! Admittedly, Vaughan's circuitous route home is an extreme example; Herbert Harrison's was more direct, sailing from Guam to San Francisco, picking up a troop train to San Antonio, where he was left to make it back to Arlington on his own. E.G. Nation was also dropped off in San Antonio and arrived by bus in Arlington late one night. He was walking home in the dark when a police car stopped to give him a lift as thanks for his service.

Fred Bondurant was sent to Reims, France after VE day to serve as part of the Allied occupation forces. In late 1945, he had a blind date with an American nurse; it was love at first sight for him. She wasn't too sure; she was also dating another officer and then was reassigned to LeHavre. After demobilization, Bondurant traveled to Baltimore to woo her. They got married 30 days later and at the time of the interview had been married for 61 years, making for a very happy ending.

Adjusting to civilian life was difficult for some while others may not have wanted to admit it. Troy Johnson, who had terrible experiences in Italy, recalled his repeated nightmares that he was going to be sent to Japan. He also recalled that several of his fellow veterans committed suicide. E.G. Nation remembered his loneliness as a survivor back at home. In addition to his brother, a number of his friends had been killed. Jack Vaughan struggled to find a job, and the other men who were looking for work after demobilization, Claude Horan and Troy Johnson, went back to working with horses. Fred Bondurant made the interesting observation that when he married his wartime sweetheart in 1946, consumer goods were still in such short supply that it was hard to furnish his new household. Nevertheless, he was extremely happy to be stateside again ("you can't explain how good it was").

Not surprisingly given the challenges of the economic transition to peacetime, half of the interviewees took advantage of the GI Bill to further

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Greatest Generation– from page 7

their education, although they did not necessarily enroll in college immediately. Fred Bondurant had just one semester left at TAMU that he almost didn't finish because he was busy challenging his professors and the graduation requirements (he was a combat-hardened Army captain, accustomed to giving orders). Claude Horan left the horses to study industrial aeronautics at Arlington State College for two years even though he had dropped out of high school. E.G. Nation also attended ASC on the GI Bill. Jack Raskopf, who earned a degree in journalism and eventually became a professor at TCU, pointed out that the GI Bill made it possible for him to move from the working class to the middle class, and this was true for many others.

It took at least five years for most of these veterans to become fully settled into their postwar lives, not just because of the strain of readjustment, but also because good jobs in local industry were not plentiful until the early 1950s. Troy Johnson also had to deal with racism and eventually moved to Grand Prairie, which had more neighborhoods open to African Americans. Only one maintained a connection to the military: Claude Horan was in the Army Reserves from 1958 to 1982 and was called back to active duty in 1961.

<u>The Importance of Oral Histories</u>

The reminiscences of these eight Arlington WWII veterans differ from romanticized accounts of the American wartime experience like noted TV journalist Tom Brokaw's bestseller *The Greatest Generation* (1998), but confirm absolutely, in personal detail, the much more complex picture presented by historian Michael C.C. Adams in his classic short study *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (1994; 2nd rev. ed., 2015). To a man, our veterans were reluctant to agree that they were heroes who represented a generation greater than any other. They were called upon to serve and did so as best they could. Hearing them reflect on their sacrifice as they neared the end of their lives is a quietly moving experience. We hope that these observations on the variety of experiences contained within the interview collection will inspire members to check them out, along with other parts of the Historical Society's extensive WWII archive.

Arlington Dance Halls Closed in 1905

(This article appeared in a special edition of the *Arlington Citizen-Journal* published in February 1972, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the *Citizen-Journal*)

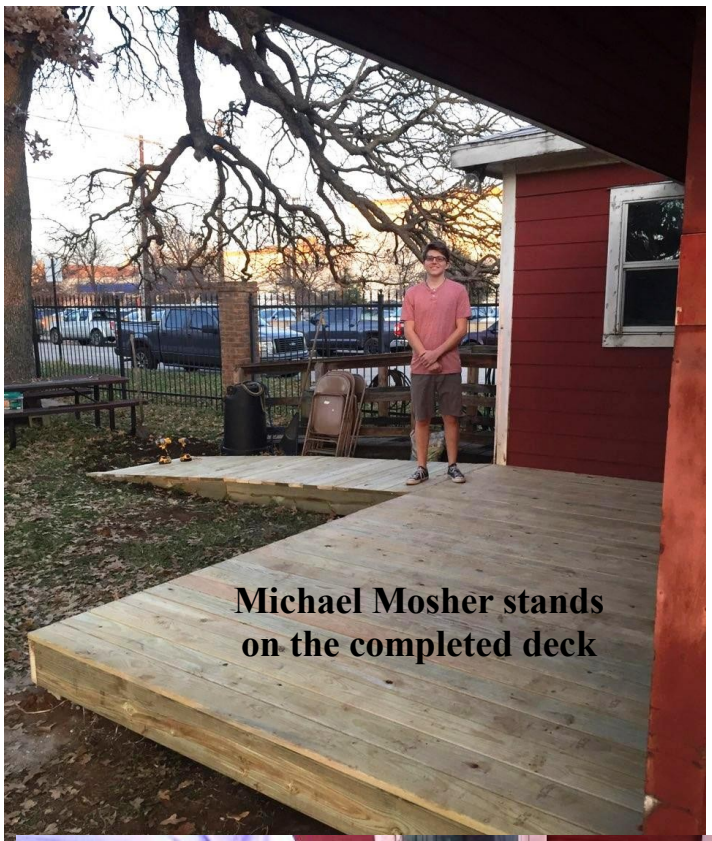
Chief of Police in Fort Worth in 1905, J. H. Maddox, issued orders that year to close all dance halls in that city, and the *Arlington Journal* commented on the move as follows:

"One by one we are throwing off those old pioneer cowboy customs and moving on to grander things. Of all the blots on the fair name of Texas, few are darker than the dance hall. There comes nearer being an excuse for the open saloon; the gambling hall is more respectable and not productive of half the evil and evil influences as the dance hall.

"People who have given this subject no particular thought have little conception of how pernicious such places are of the evil influences that they wield over boys."

New Deck at Knapp Heritage Park

The long awaited deck at the back of the James Knapp office building was completed in time for our Christmas celebration, which was, unfortunately, rained out. It was built as an Eagle Scout Project by Michael Mosher of Troop 250, which meets at New World United Methodist Church. Michael had the help of fellow troop members and friends from his youth group at Epworth UMC. Michael will receive his Eagle Scout Honor later this spring, before his graduation from Lamar High School. He also happens to be the grandson of Board member Nancy Bennett. Thank you Michael and friends!



Michael Mosher stands on the completed deck

Back door to the James Knapp building before the work was begun

Work under way

GROUNDBREAKING OF THE ARLINGTON HERITAGE MEMORIAL GROUNDS IS NOW SET FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2019 AT 11 A.M. SAVE THE DATE!

The project to make long-needed improvements to the historic cemeteries on W. Arkansas Lane (just east of Matlock Road) has reached a significant milestone. Groundbreaking is now set for Friday, February 22, at 11 a.m.

A very nice and informative website has been set up at www.ahmgc.org (for Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds Corporation—AHMGC). Much work and an untold number of hours have been dedicated to this project by the Arlington Historical Society and its many volunteers including representative from the City of Arlington and Tarrant County. Geraldine Mills was instrumental in bringing the importance of this project to the forefront. Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds Corporation has been assisting in a meaningful way. Donations are still needed to be able to complete this worthwhile project. Future donations should be made to the Arlington Heritage Memorial Grounds Corporation—which is a 501 (c) (3) organizations, so donations are tax-deductible. See their website at www.ahmgc.org. Thanks! Past contributions made via the Historical Society have been turned over to AHMGC and are recognized and honored by them.