



NEWSLETTER
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The Berachah Home
Part 3: A day in the life of the girls
By Lydia Brosowsky

This essay concludes our series on a unique Arlington institution and is based on the Berachah Home's admission records and monthly publications. Unfortunately the archives do not provide any direct evidence of the home's programs from the girls' point of view.

From 1903 to 1935, the Berachah Home for the Redemption of Erring Girls opened its doors to thousands of needy young women, part of a network of homes established by the evangelical movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition to bringing lost souls to God, this movement strived to build a better society focused solely on Him; the homes were but one of several ways to accomplish their lofty goals. Most evangelical homes kept the girls for six months and allowed them to put their babies up for adoption as they learned how to function in society.

As we have seen in the previous two essays, the Berachah Home's founders, Reverend J. T. Upchurch and his wife Maggie, were certainly committed evangelicals, dedicating their lives to serving the girls who needed them most. However, the Upchurches went above and beyond

(continued on p. 4)

In This Issue

The Berachah Home Part 3, p. 1

From the Editor, p. 1

AHS Member Spotlight, p. 2

Book Reviews on Texas History, p. 3

This Month in Texas History, p. 5

Tour Historic Arlington Part 2, p. 6

Texas, The Lone Star State, p. 9

From the Editor

Denise Youngblood

This issue contains a record number of articles by members, starting with the third and final installment of **Lydia Brosowsky's** fascinating history of the Berachah Home for Erring Girls (p. 1). Other highlights are an interview with **Kristina Rumans** on her historic preservation work (p. 2), part 2 of **Jason Sullivan's** historical tour of downtown Arlington (p. 6), and **Jannette Workman's** exploration of the history of the Lone Star Flag (p. 9). We love member contributions and encourage you to submit your story ideas. Send all suggestions and comments to me directly at denise.youngblood@uvm.edu.

AHS MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Kristina Rumans



Longtime Arlington resident Kristina Rumans, who is the current chair of the city's Landmark Preservation Commission, talks about her passion for historic preservation in this interview. Kristina traces her Texas roots back to the Texas Revolution, and she is also a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

You've been involved in landmark preservation in Arlington for many years. How did you become interested in this cause? What was your first project? Which projects are you most proud of?

I can't think of a time in my life when I didn't appreciate and enjoy the historic aspects of a community. My great grandfather was an early architect in Fort Worth and growing up in his historic neighborhood, I was raised to appreciate good architecture.

After looking for an older home my husband and I settled on a quaint Victorian in Arlington. I immediately started the process of obtaining a Texas Historic Medallion and by 1984 our home was also placed on the National Register of Historic Places. These represented the first private home in Arlington given this historic status.

Several neighbors joined my husband and me in trying to have a National Register Historic District designation for our overlooked and neglected neighborhood. At that time, the state required nominations to be submitted by Landmark Commissions and accompanied by a Historic Resources Survey. We then went to work and solicited everyone in city government and the community to create a Landmark Commission for Arlington and a Historic Resources Survey. As a "Certified Local Government" city, Arlington was required to have a commission. Both the commission and the survey were accomplished by 1988, and so we thought we were set to have our Historic District. It wasn't until 1997, when a neighbor came by to ask me to create the paperwork to apply for a historic district, that I realized that without my help it would not get done. I told him if he could get written, signed papers from all the neighbors I would do it. Of the 70 homes, only one neighbor did not want the district designation. It took several years, but the neighborhood finally received its National Historic Register status.

I am very proud of finishing this project for the neighborhood and making a statement for historic preservation in Arlington. Although difficult, I feel it was a catalyst to expose the importance of acknowledging historic resources in Arlington and preserve what little is left in our city. The history we are discovering by researching the people who lived here enriches our knowledge of our community's development and uncovers untold stories in the process.

It was also rewarding to research and write historic markers for The Hill, Arlington's historic black community. This was a part of our history that needed to be shared.

You've worked with a number of local organizations, like the AHS and the DAR, on landmark preservation and chair the city's Landmark Preservation Commission. How do you see the role of community groups changing? Is there still a need for community involvement in local preservation activities?

(continued on p. 5)



BOOK REVIEWS ON TEXAS HISTORY

by Denise Youngblood



This issue features two short reviews of new books that cater to nostalgia for simpler times.

Wanda Garner Cash. *Pancho Villa's Saddle at the Cadillac Bar: Recipes and Memories*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2020. 143 pp.

This odd little book is a compilation of anecdotes, photos, and recipes drawn from Wanda Garner Cash's family archives. Cash's grandfather, Mayo Bessan, a Louisiana native, was the founder and chief proprietor of the Cadillac Bar, which Cash characterizes as the finest eatery in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Although the Bessan family lived on the other side of the Rio Grande in Laredo, Texas, Mayo established the bar in Mexico in 1924 to get around Prohibition. These were the halcyon days before the drug cartels and other violent gangs destroyed northern Mexico, and Wanda Cash recalls an idyllic childhood walking across the bridge from Laredo to Nuevo Laredo to while the time away at the Cadillac Bar. Besides the hospitable and ever-present Mayo Bessan, the star of the restaurant was the ornate saddle allegedly belonging to the Mexican rebel and rabble-rouser Pancho Villa.

Cash is an award-winning journalist who also taught journalism at UT-Austin, so I assume she knows how to construct a narrative, but that's not evident here. Reading the book is like listening to an elderly relative's amusing but disjointed tales about a past that sounds much more fun than it probably was—and about people whose names are difficult to keep straight. Even the Great Flood of 1954 that devastated both Laredo and Nuevo Laredo (and badly damaged the Cadillac Bar) seems like a mere bump in the road in this account, and there's undoubtedly a dark side to those long booze-soaked afternoons, evenings, and nights. But once I accepted that Cash had no intention of letting reality intrude on her memories, I enjoyed reading about the larger-than-life characters, amusing incidents, and detailed descriptions of delicious food and fancy cocktails. She also includes recipes, as the subtitle promises, but I expect that the provenance of the ingredients her grandfather (and later, her father) obtained made all the difference in the world. *Pancho Villa's Saddle at the Cadillac Bar* is a perfect book to read in the pandemic, a fizzy distraction from our current worries.

Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*. *Fort Worth Memories*, vol. 3, *The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s*. Photos curated by Caitlin Waite. Fort Worth: Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* and Pediment Publishing, 2020. 144 pp.

Like the previous two volumes in the *Star-Telegram's* photographic history of Fort Worth, this one offers little in the way of a contextualizing narrative of the area's development in these decades, although the detailed captions to the pictures help. This collection accentuates the positive: Fort Worth's dynamic economic growth, the diversification of entertainment venues, and efforts to showcase the city's vibrant and multiethnic cultures. This book will evoke mainly happy memories for those who lived in Tarrant County at this time; there are almost no reminders of the problems of the

(continued on p.8)

(Berachah Home, from p. 1)

most evangelicals, offering a more comprehensive program to their “erring girls.” Girls admitted to the Berachah Home not only found a path to redemption, they were taught to become self-sufficient and thrive in society. Each girl’s personal strengths were identified and developed for at least one full year. Furthermore, pregnant girls agreed to keep their babies. Each day was filled with educational and experiential opportunities designed to prepare the girls for life after the home. It’s important to note as well that the program stressed Christian values and the power of prayer. Prayer was the backbone and scheduled throughout the day, with the girls organized into small groups called prayer bands that met and prayed in specific locations. They could be called to prayer at any time, and all day and all night prayer services took precedence over daily routines at any time for any reason.

Life at the Berachah Home began with admission. The earliest admissions ledger showed that accepting Christ as one’s savior was mandatory for acceptance. Entries show some of the girls came to the home already saved, but many were admitted because they were saved on the spot. Ledger entries were also amended when the girls were dismissed, most commonly for not really having been saved after all.

The admissions process eventually became more pragmatic. After a girl (or an interested party) submitted an application, the staff would decide whether to interview her. Personal salvation was no longer compulsory at the time of admission but was expected within six months. The home focused on getting to know the girls, finding their strengths, and guiding them to Christianity. Each girl had to give up bad habits like dipping snuff and drinking whiskey—and any expectation of privacy (for example, the matron would read all incoming and outgoing mail). Pregnant girls had to sign a contract agreeing to stay at the home for one year and keep her baby. (In the 1920s the contract was increased to two years.) Finally, the contract stated that the girl’s time with her own family would be limited for her own protection. These measures, along with living in a home built on Christian values, provided a sound path for leading young girls to Christ.

The Berachah Home accepted around 30 to 40 girls per year who rotated through the program as other girls prepared to leave. (The size of the staff varied over the years but initially there were about 6.) Daily life followed an established routine. Church services were held every Sunday morning, followed by an afternoon of Sunday school, then another church service in the evening. The first Sunday of every month was Missionary Day, a day spent learning about Christianity around the world and the missionary work sponsored by the home. On Wednesday nights, prayer services were held. There was also an all-day church service on the second Thursday of every month. The girls were kept busy the rest of the week preparing for life after the Berachah Home.

Every weekday morning the girls dressed themselves and their babies, dropping them off at the Children’s Home—first an area of the main house, later a separate building—by 6:45 am for a day of meals, play, and an introduction to Biblical scripture. At 6:00 pm, the mothers took over childcare again, sometimes helping each other. The girls’ day was considerably more structured. After dropping off their children, they met for morning prayers at 7:00 am, followed by breakfast. After breakfast the girls went to school, work, or a combination of both.

During the early years, girls with a limited education were taught to read, write, and solve elementary math problems. As the years passed, Reverend Upchurch came to understand the

(continued on p.8)

(AHS Member Spotlight, from p. 2)

The last Historic Resources Survey (2001) brought new attention to the historical importance of post war housing. Residents of the future who love the special characteristics of their neighborhoods should defend that history. From my discussions, I know that there are many residents in older neighborhoods who appreciate their neighborhoods' unique character. Historic Preservation gives a community a sense of place and should always be included in city planning.

Much of the LPC's work involves approving alterations to buildings in designated historic districts and determining whether buildings or sites are eligible for historical markers. Why is it important to preserve these structures, given that most of them are modest examples of vernacular architecture?

Arlington's history of growth and development hasn't always been kind to its historic resources. There are only around 150 High Priority category structures left in our city. We need to acknowledge their importance and show our community pride in these resources, demonstrating to visitors that we care about our history. These buildings all have their own unique characteristics, sometimes as a stand-alone recognizable structure, sometimes as part of a unique cluster of housing. I also believe in educating the community through subject markers when the history of a place is almost erased.

What's the future of landmark preservation in Arlington? What's next on your personal agenda?

We have more work to accomplish to recognize the historic resources in Arlington. The Landmark Commission will be hosting a Historic Preservation workshop in June.

I am planning efforts to coordinate with my DAR chapter to clean the older tombstones in the downtown Arlington Cemetery this spring and summer in coordination with other projects the Landmark Commission is planning for the cemetery. Not surprisingly, the COVID year has slowed down progress on this project.

I have a passion for history and especially historic preservation and enjoy being involved in worthy projects. If there is a way to share my talents in preservation efforts in our community I am always ready to volunteer or lead as needed.

This Month in Texas History

April. On April 14, 1788, **David G. Burnet**, the first (interim) president of the Republic of Texas was born in Newark, New Jersey. He arrived in Texas in 1817 and was rescued by the Comanche after a serious riding accident, living with the tribe for two years as he recovered. He traveled in and out of Texas in the 1820s as an "empresario," not settling permanently here until after his 1830 marriage. He engaged in the law, various business ventures, and of course, politics, becoming a leader in the struggle for Texas independence and an important politician afterwards. He died in Galveston in 1870.

May. Callie Russell Porter, known to the world as **Katherine Anne Porter**, author of *Ship of Fools*, was born in Indian Creek, Texas on May 15, 1890. She was raised at her grandmother's house in Kyle and in the 1910s, after a disastrous early marriage, toured Texas as an actress and singer before landing in Fort Worth in 1917 as a drama critic and gossip columnist. After 1918, she lived mainly outside Texas, but most of her best short stories are set in her native state and Mexico. She died in Maryland in 1980 but is buried in the Indian Creek Cemetery near her birthplace.

From Hayter to The Hill: Tour Historic Downtown Arlington, Part 2

By Jason Sullivan

Department of Additions & Corrections

Here is additional information, as well as a correction to part 1 included in the previous issue.

Additional Information: City Center Plaza features a World War II tribute area. In addition to the historical marker and life-sized bronze statue honoring Colonel Neel E. Kearby, there are three other historical plaques. The first honors heroes from Arlington who lost their lives in WWII. The second explains how North Texas Agricultural College (1923-1949), now UTA, got involved in wartime efforts and their impact. The third plaque, "In Memoriam - Lest We Forget," pays tribute to the service and sacrifice of the men and women of Arlington who entered the Armed Forces.

Correction: The last stop of the tour mentioned the "Bankhead Highway through Arlington" historical marker. The article incorrectly noted that the street was known today as "Abram Street." Instead, it's **Division Street**. The historical marker text can be confusing, so take a moment to read it carefully!

In the newsletter's previous issue, we completed part 1 of our Historic Tour of Downtown Arlington. Part 1 started in **Founders Plaza**. We visited **Andrew Hayter** and learned about some of the **founding families**. City Center Plaza had **World War II tributes**, the **City of Arlington historical marker** at City Hall, and the **downtown library** to explore local history and genealogy. **Knapp Heritage Park** and **Arlington Music Hall** came towards the end, with the **Bankhead Highway through Arlington historical marker** as the finale.

Part 2 highlights:

- **Historic Vandergriff Building**
- **First United Methodist Church of Arlington**
- **Old Town Historic District**
- **The Hill neighborhood**

Part 2 starts at Center and Division Streets with the **Historic Vandergriff Building**. With construction completed in 1928, it's the oldest commercial structure remaining in Arlington. Vandergriff Chevrolet occupied the building from 1937 to 1966.

In 1937, the Vandergriffs arrived in Arlington. While not one of the founding families, their influence is no less important. Tommy Joe Vandergriff, also known as Tom J., served as Arlington's mayor from 1951 to 1977. His leadership helped bring General Motors Assembly Plant, Lake Arlington, Six Flags Over Texas,



(continued on p.7)

(Tour of Historic Arlington, from p.6)

and the Texas Rangers to our city. From jobs to entertainment and prosperity to growth, Arlington still feels Mayor Vandergriff’s impact.

Today, the Historic Vandergriff Building is a City of Arlington Local Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places. There are four historical markers on the building, two Vandergriff Chevrolet signs and a large mural painted on its south wall. The neon signs, while a nice addition, aren't historic and were added during renovations. The building's location near the center of the city's original boundaries further cements its place as a significant structure in Arlington.

Let’s cross Division Street and continue with the tour. Next up is the **First United Methodist Church of Arlington**. In 1885, a wooden church was located at this site. Over 130 years later -- at the same site with continuous service -- and the church is thriving with over 5,000 members. The church, with its Gothic Revival architecture, is a City of Arlington Local Landmark. It’s also a United Methodist Historic Site and has a Texas Historical Marker.



Further north on Center Street is the **Old Town Historic District**. Inside the district is the Old Town Neighborhood. It’s listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

According to the district’s marker - *“Old Town Historic District encompasses approximately seven blocks of late 19th century and early 20th-century residential properties. Located at the northern edge of Arlington’s original town plat, the district’s boundaries include Sanford, North, Elm, and Oak Streets. Architectural styles in the neighborhood include Pre-WWII housing, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Bungalow, and Art Moderne. Early residents include city pioneers, community leaders, and merchants.”*



Located across from the marker is the boundary for the **North Edge of the Original Town**. (The marker for the southern boundary is also on Center near South Street.)



After exploring the Old Town Historic District, make your way back to Division Street and head west. Turn right onto N.L. Robinson Drive. Part of West Street, the city renamed a portion of this street after Pastor Dr. Norman Lee Robinson of nearby Mount Olive Baptist Church.

(continued on p. 10)

(Berachah Home, from p. 4)

value of a good education. By 1919, his school program offered reading, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, penmanship, Bible, and Hebrew history at a high school level. Art and music classes were also offered. Even a nursing class was developed. Longfellow, Tennyson, and Shakespeare were part of the reading curriculum, and the girls would play a game identifying quotes from the classic authors along with the Bible. Hours for the school were 8:30 am to 12:00 pm and from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Biblical training was another aspect of life at the Berachah Home, and there were additional special classes two evenings per week for those hoping to become ministers. Girls destined for missionary work also learned about the areas where they would be stationed. The girls were also provided hands-on experience working with Maggie Upchurch in the slums of Dallas.

The education offered at the Berachah Home also trained girls for the editing and printing trades. Girls with exceptional spelling and grammar skills learned to publish materials for the home and were taught all aspects of the business: they cleaned the office, maintained the equipment, edited and printed the materials. Girls planning to work in an office also had additional training on how to maintain professional relationships with men and avoid sexual harassment. Occasionally, a girl might stay on and join the staff at the home.

Household arts were also taught; sewing, cooking, cleaning, and laundry were skills practiced and perfected at the home. For a small fee, the girls offered laundry services to the general public. Other girls also learned how to plant and grow food; the Berachah Home's impressive garden and orchard provided food for the home and a learning opportunity for the girls. In the summer months, the girls would earn extra money for the home by helping local farmers in their fields.

In addition, the home emphasized teaching the girls how to express themselves in public and to become useful citizens. In 1911, Reverend Upchurch and his wife established the Zeta Sigma Society to help the girls gain the confidence required to function in society. They worked together to make presentations on various topics. They also played games and sang songs, and each meeting concluded with refreshments and prayer.

The ultimate goal of the Berachah Home program was to prepare the girls for leading a Godly and productive life in the real world. However, it was not for everyone; some were not interested in keeping their babies, while others mistakenly thought they were, only to leave the program early. Although Reverend Upchurch boasted a 75% success rate, without more information from the girls themselves, this statistic cannot be validated. Certainly the girls who stayed at the home put a tremendous amount of work into preparing for independent lives. The history of the Berachah Home provides a remarkable example of evangelical progressivism in Arlington in the early years of the last century.

Lydia Brosowsky welcomes your comments or questions about the Berachah Home; email her at lbrosowsky@yahoo.com.

(Book Reviews, from p.3)

period, and nostalgia reigns. Taken as a whole, the three volumes of *Fort Worth Memories* illustrate the evolution of photojournalism and camera technology very well, as we see how picture quality and composition improves from decade to decade, along with increasing diversification of subject matter, away from buildings and posed photos of the city's elite, to images that better reflect the variety in the community and the moods of the moment.



The First Lone Star flag

Texas, the Lone Star State

By Jannette Workman



The Burnet flag

AHS Board Member Jannette Workman taught Texas history in AISD for 37 years and contributes occasional articles on this fascinating subject to the newsletter.

For nearly 200 years, people all around the world have come to know Texas as the Lone Star State. However, it was not until 2015 that the 84th Texas Legislature designated “the Lone Star State” as the official nickname of Texas. The exact origins of this colorful phrase and the use of a single, white, five-pointed star to represent Texas are unclear. Some accounts trace it to a flag carried by the 1819 James Long Expedition, an early attempt to free Texas from the Spanish Empire. This first Lone Star Flag was a solid red flag with a “lone” white star in the center.

The first official use of the Lone Star flag came in 1836 when the Congress of the Republic of Texas adopted a flag with a five-pointed gold star on a background of deep azure, known as the David G. Burnet Flag in honor of the *ad interim* president of the new republic. In 1839, the Texas Congress adopted what is commonly known as the Lone Star Flag, showing a bright white star against deep blue on the left of the flag and two horizontal stripes of white and red on the flag’s right. The symbolism of these colors is the same as for the U.S. flag: blue stands for loyalty, white for purity, and red for bravery. The Texas Flag Code also states that the single (lone) star stands for the unity of Texas and Texans as one for God, State, and Country.



The Lone Star flag

When the United States formally annexed Texas on December 29, 1845 as the 28th state, the national flag became the state flag. The Republic of Texas’s flag is one of only two state flags to have previously served as a national flag (the state flag of Hawaii is the other one). Another curious fact about the Texas flag is that a legislative oversight resulted in there being no official state flag from 1879 to 1933, the year the Texas Flag Code was passed.

However, the urban legend that the Texas flag is the only state flag that is allowed to fly at the same height as the U.S. flag is false. According to the U.S. Flag Code, any state flag can be flown at the same height as the U.S. flag, but the U.S. should be on its right (the viewer’s left).

Many Americans may be unaware that their state has an official pledge to the state flag. Seventeen states have such state flag pledges, distinct from the pledge to the American flag. Two states, Alabama and Tennessee, even include vows to die for their flag in their pledges!

The Texas pledge to the state flag was adopted in 1933 and the phrase “under God” was added in 2007. Texas state law requires the recitation of pledges to both the national and state flags every morning in public schools (although individuals may opt out). The Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas Flag reads:

“Honor the Texas flag; I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one state under God, one and indivisible.”

The “Lone Star” flag is widely regarded as a symbol of Texas’s independent spirit and as noted above, is the inspiration for our official nickname “The Lone Star State.” This historic emblem is to be treated with a great degree of reverence and esteem.

(Tour of Historic Arlington, from p.7)

Northwest of the original city boundaries was a five-block area known as “The Hill.” Its area includes Sanford, West (N.L. Robinson Drive,) Prairie, and Taylor streets. At one time, it was the only area designated for the city’s African-American residents. The Hill’s most significant impact was in the period 1890-1950 before desegregation. It remains a vital part of Arlington’s history. Churches and schools were fixtures of The Hill neighborhood, along with homes, stores, and a park.



In addition to **Mount Olive Baptist Church**, there is what’s now known as the **Armstrong AME Church** and the **Arlington Church of God in Christ**. All three churches were founded in the 1890s and are still spiritual pillars of the community. All three also have Texas Historical Markers on-site.

The final stop on the tour is 400 W. Sanford Street. It’s the address for **George Stevens Park**. Mr. Stevens served as a Principal of Booker T. Washington elementary and middle school from 1941-1965. It was one of Arlington’s first black schools and later became part of AISD. During his tenure, the school tripled in size. As a tribute to Mr. Stevens and his impact, George Stevens Park is located near the school. Located in the park is a Texas Historical Marker for “**The Hill.**”



With that, our tour of Historic Downtown Arlington comes to an end. From Hayter to The Hill, we’ve seen significant pieces of Arlington’s history. The distance on a map is less than a few miles, but we’ve traveled back in time to some of Arlington’s earliest and most prominent people and events.

The next time you’re on Center Street, take a trip through the past and tour Historic Downtown Arlington.

