

THE GROVE

(Recreating historical events)

Somewhere on a Sunday in 1984 I stated to the congregation of the Saint Mark CME Church that I would make myself a committee of one to write the proposal for a state historical marker for the church. I further said that I would be calling on the families who had continuous membership in said church for more than three generations.

I don't know why, but I kept my word. No one reminded me of said promise and no one volunteered any information. I built the proposal and church history around those families and received from them three major bits of information: (1) was the verbal history of the church by Carrie Bolden White, (2) was a copy of a warranty deed to the property across from the church at Padon and First Streets, and (3) was the autobiography of Bishop M. F. Jefferson who began his ministry as the first official pastor of St. Mark.

This warranty deed for the property across the street from the church (discovered, copied, delivered to me by Mrs. Evelyn Williams) turned out to be the deed to the Grove. Yes, several black churches owe their beginnings to this spot, Specifically St. Mark, Bethel, and New Bethel. All three trace their roots back to a brush arbor on this spot where we are assembled today. Children also attended school here. There was a kindergarten school here for as late as the late 1960's.

So as far back as we know this acre of land has always been here for the use of blacks. Most likely slaves assembled here for worship and some of the same people as Freedmen continued to come here after 1865. It is fairly safe to say that this acre was used as a rest stop for men and animals who had delivered farm produce to the market here in Longview.

From the deed it seems to indicate that this acre was originally just outside of the city limits. Questions come up such as: Was the cost (\$40.00) a little high? Then, why was it stated? Just what were the attitudes of White's toward the Freedmen just five years after the Civil War?

Look at the last question, attitudes. The South had just lost the war and had no right to look toward National government for any favors. Two things had been discussed: pay to owners \$500. for each slave and pay to each freedman \$40. and a mule. those proposals rotted in the pigeon holes of the congress and the president. The southerners could not press the issue because they were afraid of being asked for repatriation costs; the Freedmen were illiterates for most part. The ex-slave owners took their anger out on the ex-slaves' hides as oft as he could, and the ex-slaves were too dependent on ex-slave owners for employment. It seems impossible that the ex-slaves survived because they did not own anything, not even the few clothes on their backs when they were freed, and they were given nothing afterwards. Therefore the slave owners suffered a great financial loss because all the funds they had invested in purchasing and maintaining the slaves had gone with the wind. They were furious.

THE GROVE

There were those who sympathized with the slave owners, but there were possibly more who sympathized with the ex-slaves.

When I looked and looked again I always came up with the same answer, and I may be wrong, but I see so many good people coming to the aid of the Freedmen. Even today when the process of Affirmative Action was almost gone, it was given another chance. Beyond blood, sweat and tears Affirmative Action has been the only recourse for so many descendants of the Freedmen. They had paid so much for their forty acres and a mule for hundreds of years, and this is possibly the only way they can receive any considerations for repatriation.

John R Magrill saw the need the freedmen had for this little acre of land so he gave it to them for whatever they had after the hat was passed around. Chances are good that the amount was less than \$5.00, so he thanked the freedmen for \$40.00 so it would seem that he had made a big profit. Now those who might have physically opposed him would think that he had made a killing on the Freedmen by doubling the price on land which now was depleted of its organic power.

During those days and for generations afterwards, there existed so many people who went out of their way to assist Blacks when they were in need. Those could not be recognized publicly for their gratuity, and they remained silent because there were others who opposed them and would do them great harm physically, socially, and economically.

May the spirits of John R Magrill and the many others who worked hard to improve the cultural, educational, social, and economic plights of the Freedmen and their descendants abide in peace in this place in perpetuity. Now we dedicate this marker to the memory of those whom You, my God, sent us when we had need of You, on this 18th day of July in the year of our Lord 2003.

Willie A. Williams

Socko's friends were pledged to secrecy. They kept their word until all danger of disciplinary action was past. Had news reached the higher-ups a general court martial would have been almost certain.

Reagan was killed in 1931 near Pensacola, Fla. He was in the air with a student who became panicky and froze to the controls. The plane crashed into the sea.

Some 10 years later Collings, who felt that his friend was due belated recognition, got the facts together for a magazine article. Next, he asked for verification from Col. W. P. T. Hill of the Navy Department, who had served with Reagan. Col. Hill told Collings that "Socko Reagan was definitely the father of dive bombing."

Collings' article, published in the April 25, 1942 issue of the old Liberty Magazine, ended on an ironic note:

"Although the law later was changed and Reagan's all-round ability was recognized, at the time the man who invented dive bombing could not be officially classified as a pilot because regulations did not provide for pilots below the rank of second lieutenant. He could not even call himself an aviator."

THE "ALL-THE-NEGROES" LEGACY

Only a few blocks from the courthouse plaza in Longview is a valuable piece of property that can never be sold. The owners: All of the Negroes of Longview.

The land was deeded to the community's colored population by John R. Magrill more than a hundred years ago and the title is still regarded as valid. During the oil boom in the thirties several attempts were made to buy the one-acre tract but the would-be purchasers could not clear the legal hurdles.

Today the property, which touches First, Padon, Green and Grove streets, is maintained by the city as a park and is tax exempt. A small frame building is used as a day nursery and kindergarten and, occasionally, for religious services.

Originally the tract was part of a dense, wooded area. Most of the trees have died or been cut down but it is still called "The Grove."

What is the story back of Magrill's strange gift?

According to C. A. Magrill, 77-year-old descendant of the donor, the property was deeded to the Negroes long before Longview was founded. He fixes the date roughly at 1850.

"Uncle John Magrill came to Texas from Alabama some time in the forties and acquired a lot of timbered land. Gregg County had not yet been created but was a part of Upshur County. On the present site of Longview was a community known as Arpville.

"There were quite a few Negroes in the area and apparently they had no suitable place to worship. Uncle John deeded the land not just to one group but to all the Negroes so they could build what was then known as a meeting house. It was to be used by members of all denominations."

C. A. Magrill, whose family came originally from Ireland, says the original deed was destroyed in the courthouse fire at Gilmer and the exact wording of the document is not known.

Some of the old-timers who have heard the story handed down through several generations say the property was transferred to "all persons of African descent in Upshur County." C. A. Magrill, however, believes the gift was intended only for the Negroes in the old Arpville community.

It is unlikely that the Negroes' claim to the property will ever be successfully challenged.

For, regardless of the wording of the deed, city and county

authorities, as well as the taxpayers, appear willing to concede that "The Grove" belongs to all of the Negroes of Longview.

THE PHANTOM PIANIST OF MARTIN'S MILL

You don't hear much these days about the Phantom Pianist of Martins Mill, in Van Zandt County.

Nearly 50 years have passed since strange goings-on in the Holly Springs Methodist Church all but disrupted this peaceful community. And the ranks of the old-timers who can remember the incident are rapidly thinning.

It happened on a hot summer day in 1925. Not a breath of air was stirring. The heat was particularly oppressive in the church where funeral services were being conducted for Mrs. Mart Wallace, a long-time member.

Near the end of the service the choir sang a hymn. When the hymn was concluded the pianist left her seat and moved back among the mourners.

Then a strange thing happened. A tinkling sound filled the church. All eyes turned toward the piano but no one was there. The tinkling continued. Was it music — or imagination?

The next day everyone was talking about the eerie melody. No one could give an explanation. The late C. B. Brock, choir leader, had been standing near the piano and he stoutly denied his ears had deceived him.

"It sounded just like someone sitting there playing," he said.

At least 20 of his townspeople agreed with Brock.

On the other hand Mrs. J. C. Burrage, sister of Mrs. Wallace, scoffed at the idea of music played by unseen hands.

"It's ridiculous" she said. A good many others shared her viewpoint.

The controversy split the community into two factions — those who sided with Brock and those who sided with Mrs. Burrage.

Only two plausible explanations were advanced: A mouse had found its way into the piano and was crawling along the taut steel wires. Or a wasp had built its nest on the sounding board.

That didn't end the arguments which often became heated. Twenty years passed and the mystery of the Phantom Pianist remains unsolved.

But in 1949 the Martins Mill High School basketball team won the state Class B championship and the phantom lost its priority as a conversation piece.

They're still talking about the 1949 champions. And there doesn't seem to be any basis for controversy.

The local team, they'll tell you, was the best bunch of players that have ever trotted onto a basketball court.

There's no argument about it.

And peace has returned to Martins Mill.

THE NOSE-THUMBER AND THE SNIPER

Historians, as a rule, are inclined to overlook the lighter touch.

That's why few students of Texas history ever heard of John Bricker, one of the early casualties of the Texas Revolution.

Bricker, a member of Stephen F. Austin's colony at San Felipe, was a rollicking playboy whose irrepressible love of fun led to his death on April 7, 1836.

There's a monument to his memory at San Felipe but the inscription makes no reference to the gayer moments of the hero's life.

A grateful republic deeded 640 acres to Bricker's heirs

O. H. METHVIN, M. R. METHVIN

TO DEED

WM. THOMAS, S. M. GRACE & J. R. MAGRILL

This indenture made and entered into this the 17th day of May One thousand eight hundred and fifty four between O. H. Methvin & Margaret R. Methvin & Wm. Thomas, S. M. Grace & John R. Magrill of the same State and County aforesaid of the other part, Witnesseth, that the said O. H. Methvin & Margaret R. Methvin for & in consideration of the sum of Eight hundred & Twenty five dollars to us cash in hand paid by the said Wm. Thomas & S. M. Grace & John R. Magrill the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged have this day bargained & sold & conveyed unto the said Wm. Thomas, S. M. Grace & John R. Magrill their heirs executors & assigns a certain - or parcel of land situated & lying in the State & County aforesaid on the East side of Graces Creek & in the Southern part of said County Butted & bounded as follows, Beginning at the South East corner of a survey made for Hamilton McNutt & the South West corner made for Alexander Jordan & running North to the South East corner of Earpville; Thence West to the South West corner of Bumpus Back Lot; Thence North to Alley; Thence West to the South West corner of Robert Earps Lot outside of said Earpville; Thence North to the main road & Street leading through Earpville; Thence West with said road to Winbushes East boundary line; Thence South to Winbushes South East corner; Thence East thirty nine poles; Thence South 164 poles to McNutts South boundary line & M D Greers North boundary; Thence East 66 pole to the place of beginning, containing one hundred & ten acres more or less & also two Lots in the Town of Earpville situated on the North side of Main Street No. 8 & 9 and we the said O. H. Methvin & Margaret R. Methvin warrant & forever defend the right & title to the above described land & its appertences thereto belonging from all persons whatever to the said Wm. Thomas, S. M. Grace & John R. Magrill their heirs, executors & assigns for which we O. H. Methvin & Margaret R. Methvin bind ourselves our heirs, executors & assigns forever unto the said Wm. Thomas, S. M. Grace & John R. Magrill their heirs executors & assigns.

In Testimony whereof we set our hands & affix our scrolls for seals in the presents of Witnesses

W. H. Payne

O. H. Methvin (L. S.)

Margaret R. Methvin (L. S.)

STATE OF TEXAS |
 UPSEUR COUNTY |

I, W. H. Payne, Notary Public in & for the

County of Upshur & State aforesaid do hereby certify that this day personally appeared before me. O. H. Methvin whose signature appears to the foregoing Deed & who acknowledged the same to be his voluntary act and deed for the use & purposes therein contained.

Given under my hand and notarial seal this 17th day of May A. D. 1854.

W. H. Payne, Notary Public.

STATE OF TEXAS }
UPSHUR COUNTY }

Personally appeared before me, W. H. Payne, Notary

Public for the County & State afore named Margaret R. Methvin wife of O. H. Methvin one of the parties to the annexed Deed dated May 17th, 1854, & who being examined by me private apart from her husband & having the same fully explained to her she the Margaret R. Methvin acknowledged the act & deed to be her own act willingly signed & delivered for the purposes therein contained & that she does not wish to retract it.

To certify which I hereunto set my name & affix my seal of office this 17th day of May A. D. 1854.

W. H. Payne, Notary Public.

Filed for record August 23rd, A. D. 1854, G. E. Warren, C. Clk

WILLIAM WARD

TO DEED

MELINDA BOSWELL

THE STATE OF TEXAS }
COUNTY OF UPSHUR }

Know all men by these presents that I, William

Ward, Sally Ward his wife of the County of Titus of said State for and in consideration of a valuable consideration to-wit, certain Town Lots lying and being situated in the Town of Dangerfield of Titus County, Beginning at the North East corner of Block 23 and running due West one hundred and eighty feet; Thence South one hundred and twenty feet; Thence West 160 feet; Thence North 120 feet so as to include the 3 lots of 60 feet each fronting on King Street also one Lot in the South East corner of Block 23, fronting 60 feet 60 feet on Hughes Street, which above specified consideration I acknowledge to have received from Malinda Boswell and for which I have this day granted bargained sold released and conveyed and by these presents do, grant bargain sell alien and convey unto her the sd Melinda Boswell her heirs and assigns all my right title interest and claim in and to certain parcels of land or Town lots lying and being in the Town of Gilmer of sd Co & State known and designated upon the plan of said Town as Lots No. 1, 2, 3, 4 5 & 6 in block No. 32 & Lots No. 1 & 2 in Block 33. To have and to hold to herself her heirs and assigns all my right title interest and claim in and to sd Lots, together with the appurtenances to the same belonging or in anywise incident thereto in fee simple forever and I the sd Ward do by these presents hereby bind myself my heirs and assigns to forever defend the sd Malinda Boswell her heirs and assigns in the peaceable possession of sd Lots against the claim of any and every person whomsoever claiming or to claim the same.

Vol N pg 20

R. Magrill Jr, Died Freedman's Church
 of the State of Texas, Know all men by these
 County of Tarrant & presents that I John R Magrill
 of the aforesaid State and County, in consideration
 of the sum of forty dollars in specie paid me by the
 colored people in and around Longview the
 receipt for which is hereby acknowledged have
 agreed bargained sold conveyed to them their
 heirs or assigns one acre of land in the aforesaid
 State and County near Longview commencing
 at the aforesaid Mrs. R. Magrill N.W. corner
 and running South with said Magrill West
 Boundary line seventy yards to a stake thence
 east seventy yards to a small Pine (blazed)
 thence North seventy yards to John R. Magrill
 North Boundary line to a Pine thence West to the place
 of beginning containing in all one acre of land
 to have and to hold the aforesaid premises
 - for the use only of Church and school
 the legal right and title to said land I warrant
 good against the claims of all persons which

I will defend said Church to be known and
 used as united with the colored people
 signed sealed and delivered in presence of
 J. Taylor John R. Magrill (seal)
 D. Lee & Phillip

Alice ^{his} Perry
 next

That State of Texas
 County of Tarrant Before me W. W. Taylor a Justice of the
 Peace in and for Precinct No 3 of Tarrant County and
 Official Notary Public personally called John R. Magrill
 of the said Precinct, whom name appeared as Grantor in the
 foregoing deed of conveyance, or writing bearing date the 25th
 day of July 1871, and acknowledged the same to
 be his act and deed, and declared that he signed and
 delivered the same for the purposes, uses and consid-
 -erations therein set forth and expressed.

Notary which I had signed
 named and affix my official seal this 25th day of
 July 1871 W. W. Taylor J. and Notary
 Public

I will deposit said church to be known and
used as unions with the colored people
by the said and delivered in presence
of the said John H. Maguire

John H. Maguire
Deputy Sheriff

County of Nelson, State of N.C. I, John H. Maguire, a Justice of the
Peace in and for Precinct No. 3 of the County of Nelson, and
Official Notary Public personally and before me John H. Maguire
of the said County of Nelson, who is qualified as Justice of the
Peace and Notary Public, on this 30th day of July 1899, and
acknowledged the same to be his act and deed, and he signed and
delivered the same for the purposes and in accordance
with the provisions therein set forth and expressed
names and after my official seal this 30th day of
July 1899 John H. Maguire J.P. and Notary Public

John Taylor Esq. of the State of North Carolina
The State of North Carolina, known as the State of
North Carolina, do hereby certify that the said
and in consideration of the sum of one hundred
and one half Dollars, \$101.50, of me paid
by Andrew S. Taylor here this day bargained
sold and conveyed and do hereby bargain, sell
and convey unto the said Andrew S. Taylor
all that tract or parcel of land situated and
described as follows viz: In the County of
Yadkin beginning at a stake at the S.W. corner
of David Hill's record on the headright
survey of David Hill, at the county line
between the counties of Harris and Yadkin
from which a Cert. Copy No. 1229 was
forth with the County line 1600 on to a stake
thence west 1229 rods to A. H. Hill's C.R. corner
thence south with and within the boundary
line 1600 on to said within the corner thereof
1229 rods to the place of beginning containing
in all 300 1/2 acres of land together with all
good things and things thereunto in anywise
appertaining to the same by

copy to hold and preserve above mentioned unto
the said John Baldor his heirs and assigns forever
and I the undersigned hereby give myself my heirs
and assigns to support and defend the title of
said premises unto the said John Baldor his heirs
and assigns forever. In witness whereof I
have hereunto set my hand using a seal of office
this March 11th 1871
J. H. Fowler

John C. Baldor

The State of Texas before me W. H. Payne a Justice
County of Wheeler 3^d of the Peace for Precinct No 1
Notary Public personally came to my State a Sub-
scribing witness to the above said deed bearing date
March 11th 1871 and stated on oath
that he saw John Baldor subscribe the same
and that he signed the paper as a witness
at the request of the said John Baldor.
Witness my hand and seal of office this
11th day of March 1871
W. H. Payne Justice and Notary Public

W. H. Payne 25

D. Magrill Esq. D. D. of Freedman's Church
Parish of St. James, Louisiana by virtue
County of Wheeler presents this John R. Magrill
of the above said State and County in consideration
of the sum of forty dollars in specie paid me by the
Colonial people in and around Longview the
receipt for which is hereby acknowledged is here
by sold bargained sold conveyed to them their
heirs or assigns one acre of land in the above
said County and Precinct containing
at the northeast corner of the corner
and running north with the Magrill West
boundary line seventy yards to a stake, thence
east seventy yards to a small Pine (Blazed)
thence north seventy yards to John R. Magrill
North boundary line to a Pine thence west to the place
of beginning containing in all one acre of land
to have and to hold the above granted premises
unto the use only of the Church and school

The following article is taken from The Dallas Morning News, Wednesday, October 28, 1959. Sec. 4, p. 3.

East Texas Notebook
By John M. Hayes
East Texas Bureau of the News

Longview, Texas -- Only a few blocks from the Courthouse plaza is a valuable piece of property that can never be sold. The owners: All the Negroes in Longview.

The land was deeded to the community's colored population by John R. Magrill more than a hundred years ago and the title is still regarded as valid. During the oil boom in the thirties several attempts were made to buy the one-acre tract but the would-be purchasers could not clear the legal hurdles.

Today the property, which touches First, Padon, Green and Grove streets, is maintained by the city as a park and is tax exempt. A small frame building is used as a day nursery and kindergarten and, occasionally, for religious services.

Originally the tract was part of a dense, wooded area. Most of the trees have died or been cut down but it is still called "The Grove".

What is the story back of Magrill's strange gift?

According to C.A. Magrill, 77-year old descendant of the donor, the property was deeded to the Negroes long before Longview was founded. He fixes the date roughly at 1850.

"Uncle John Magrill came to Texas from Alabama some time in the forties and acquired a lot of timbered land. Gregg County had not yet been created but was a part of Upshur County. On the present site of Longview was a community known as Arpville.

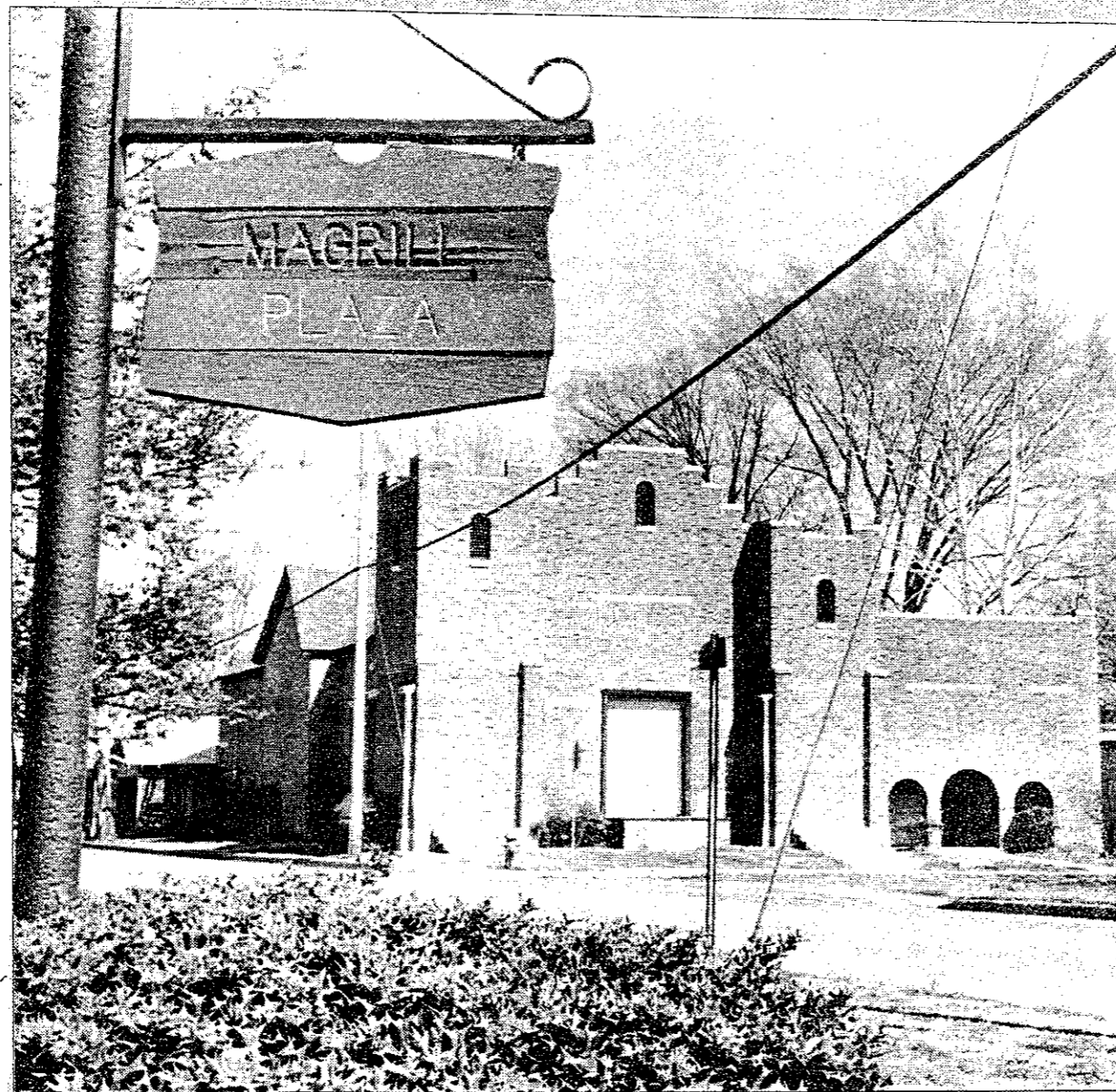
"There were quite a few Negroes in the area and apparently they had no suitable place to worship. Uncle John deeded the land not just to one group but to all the Negroes so they could build what was then known as a meeting house. It was used by members of all denominations."

C.A. Magrill, whose family came originally from Ireland, says the original deed was destroyed in the courthouse fire at Gilmer and the exact wording of the document is not known.

Some of the old-timers who have heard the story handed down through several generations say the property was transferred to "all persons of African descent in Upshur County." C. A. Magrill, however, believes the gift was intended only for the Negroes in the old Arpville community.

It is unlikely that the Negroes' claim to the property will ever be successfully challenged.

For, regardless of the wording of the deed, city and county authorities, as well as the taxpayers, appear willing to concede that "The Grove" belongs to all of the Negroes of Longview.



Magrill Plaza and old church building of St. Mark C.M.E. located at N. First and Padon streets.

Who Owns "The Grove"

On July 25, 1871, there was a tract of land located not far from the present day Gregg County Courthouse, that was deeded to the Colored People in and around Longview by John R. Magrill, a white landowner in the area during that time.

This land that is being referred to is located where the city now maintains a park called Magrill Plaza and where the old St. Mark C.M.E. Church still stands, just east of the park, on the east side of North First Street.

The land back in 1867 was a pine or timber thicket that everyone called "The Grove". Many Negroes, during that time, had been using the land under some of the thickets for a place of worship. There were several Negroes in this area, that was a part of Upshur County at this time, called the Longview Community or this portion was called Arville.

The Upshur County Courthouse burned in the early 1900's and everyone assumed that all records were burned and destroyed also. Therefore, several attempts of potential buyers in the thirties (30's) met legal confusion because no one could find the deeds, or could combat the legal obstacles.

But according to the deeds that have been located, the one-acre tract of land was purchased

from John R. Magrill (not donated by him as many people thought) for forty dollars (\$40.00) in species by the colored people in and around Longview. The boundaries of the land takes it beginning at John R. Magrill's northwest corner and running south on Magrill's west boundary line seventy yards to a stake. Then east seventy yards to a small Pine (blazed) and north seventy yards to John R. Magrill's north boundary to a Pine, then, west to the place of beginning containing in all one acre.

The deeds state also that the land can only be used for a church and a school. The deed is signed by John R. Magrill, the seller of the property and by three Negroes. They were: O. J. Taylor, Silas Billup and Alick Berry. W.A. Wayne, Jr. witnessed the signatures.

Some people contend that the land was not intended to be owned by all the Negroes in and around Longview, but for the group that was meeting there for worship.

John R. Magrill being of the Methodist religious faith and the Negroes that were gathering for worship of the Methodist faith led people to believe that the land was for the black church organized during that time by R. A. "Bob" Hagler called St. Mark Methodist Church.

R. A. Hagler is the grandfather of Andretta Hagler and the great grandfather of Boyce Jones, principal of G. K. Foster Elementary School.

Bishop Jameson, a Methodist minister pastoring at Miles Memorial Methodist Church in Marshall in 1871, helped with the organizing of the newly formed St. Mark Methodist Church.

In 1971, the St. Mark C.M.E. Church congregation sold the portion of "The Grove" where the old church set and moved to its present location on Sapphire Street.

Many people believe that the history of black people in Longview began and lies within the ancestry of the St. Mark C.M.E. Church ("The Grove"). For out of St. Mark ("The Grove") came Mary C. Womack, Janie Daniels, Maggie B. Hudson, Hazel Broughton, J. L. Everhart, and Lloyd H. Walker. Four of these people had Public Schools named after them; one, a city recreational center and another a city park.

Many people question the legality of the city making and maintaining a park from land that has not been deeded to them by the rightful owners. "The Grove" or Magrill Plaza still belongs to the Colored People in and around Longview and there is an original deed of trust that has not been destroyed.

LONGVIEW COMMUNITY PRESS

25¢

Thursday, February 28, 1985

P. O. Box 8531, Longview, TX 75607

THE NEWSPAPER PEOPLE ACTUALLY READ
(Only Locally Owned Newspaper In Town)

(214) 758-4102

Volume 2, Number 5

2001

1999 Application Form Official Texas Historical Marker

(Please complete both sides of form.)

This marker is for (title or subject): "THE GROVE"

(Title subject to change by THC staff and/or State Marker Review Board.)

County: GREGG

Marker location (street address and city, or specific directions from nearest town on state highway map):
600 block of N. Green St. Bounded by N. Green, Grove, N. First and Padon Streets: one entire block.

Distance and direction of marker topic from marker site (if applicable): Ten feet east of sidewalk, middle of the block on Green Street.

Approval of County Historical Commission

The application and narrative history must be approved by the county historical commission before forwarding to the Texas Historical Commission.

Signature of CHC chair or Marker Committee chair: Norman W. Black, D.D. Date: 12-26-01

Address: 417 Mobberly Ave.

Phone: (903) 757-2261 FAX: (903) 753-5337 email: norman.black@co.gregg.tx.us

The CHC chair or Marker Committe chair automatically will receive all copies of correspondence regarding this marker project.

Permission of owner for marker placement

Permission for placement of a marker must be obtained from the property owner. Please provide the name of a contact person if the owner is an institution, organization, or public entity. This section need not be completed if the marker is to be placed on right-of-way maintained by the Texas Department of Transportation.

Name: Karen Daly, Assistant City Manager, City of Longview

Contact person (if applicable): same

Mailing address: P.O. Box 1952, Longview, Texas 75606

Phone: 903-237-1021 FAX: _____ email: _____

Owner's Signature: Karen Daly

Do you wish to receive copies of all correspondence concerning this marker application? Yes No

To whom should the request for payment be addressed?

Name: Dr. Norman Black

Contact person (if applicable): Dr. Norman Black

Mailing address: 417 Mobberly Ave., Longview, Texaa 75602

Phone: (903) 757-2261 FAX: (903) 753-5337 email: norman.black@co.gregg.tx.us

Does this person wish to receive copies of all other correspondence concerning this application? Yes No

Is there anyone else to whom all correspondence concerning this marker application should be addressed? (One additional name and address only, please.)

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____ email: _____

(over)



TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

November 25, 2001

THE GROVE

There is an unusual piece of ground in downtown Longview, Gregg County, Texas. It is unusual because no one person owns it. It belongs to the "Colored People of Longview". Today it is known as the "Rose Garden" or Magrill Plaza but for many years it was known to the black people of the area as simply, "The Grove" or "Meeting Place".

This one-acre plot, bounded by N. Green, Grove, N. First and Padon Streets was deeded to "The Colored People in and around Longview" "for use only of a church or school", by John R. Magrill for the sum of forty dollars on July 15, 1871.¹ Tradition holds that since the black people had no worship place of their own Magrill decided they should have one. It was not an out-right gift to them, however, as is popular thought. At that time Longview, founded just the year before, was still in Upshur County: this portion of Gregg County not formed until 1873.

Not much information about Magrill can be found today but it is known that he came to this area from Alabama. He purchased a large area of timbered land in the Earpville area adjoining O. H. Methvin's land on the east. Later, in 1874, he sold part of this land to the International & Great Northern Railroad that was platted into Longview Junction.² The one-acre site was the northwest corner of his property, square in shape, seventy yards on each side. Today, the site is more rectangular in nature due to the

¹ Deed Records of Upshur County, Vol. N., pp. 229, 230.

² Deed Records of Gregg County, Vol. A., p. 266.

widening of N. Green and First Streets through the years. Assuming each street was increased by eight feet the result is the same as the original measurements, 49,412 square feet. No burial site or record of Magrill's death has been found. That he was an important person in early Longview is known because a well-traveled street is named for him. Although he is not buried here, a small cemetery on East Cotton Street in Longview is named Magrill Cemetery. It is known that Magrill was a member of the Methodist-Episcopal Church, South.³ His last place of residence is said to have been on North Center Street that is now occupied by the Masonic Temple. The house was a plain, rough-lumbered, "clap-boarded" dwelling with a porch supported by wood posts across the entire, west front.⁴

W. A. Williams, in his narrative history of St. Mark C.M.E. Church including in the application for an Official Texas Historical Marker, quotes from an unpublished church history by member Carrie Bolden White (1880-1974) as told to her, that the Freedmen (former slaves) had been holding services under a brush arbor on this site since 1867.⁵ St. Mark C.M.E. Church continued to use the brush arbor until 1876 or early 1877 when the church built its first building across the street on North First and Padon Streets.⁶ In keeping with the intent of Magrill that the land was for the use of all colored people, at least one other congregation, Bethel Baptist Church, used the brush arbor for services.

³ Hays, Robert M., *It Really Happened in East Texas*, Branch-Smith, Inc., Ft. Worth, Tex. n.d., pp. 12-14.

⁴ Personal communication with Lawrence Birdsong, Jr., Nov. 12, 2001.

⁵ St. Mark C.M.E. Church History, Gregg County Historical Commission files

⁶ *Ibid.*

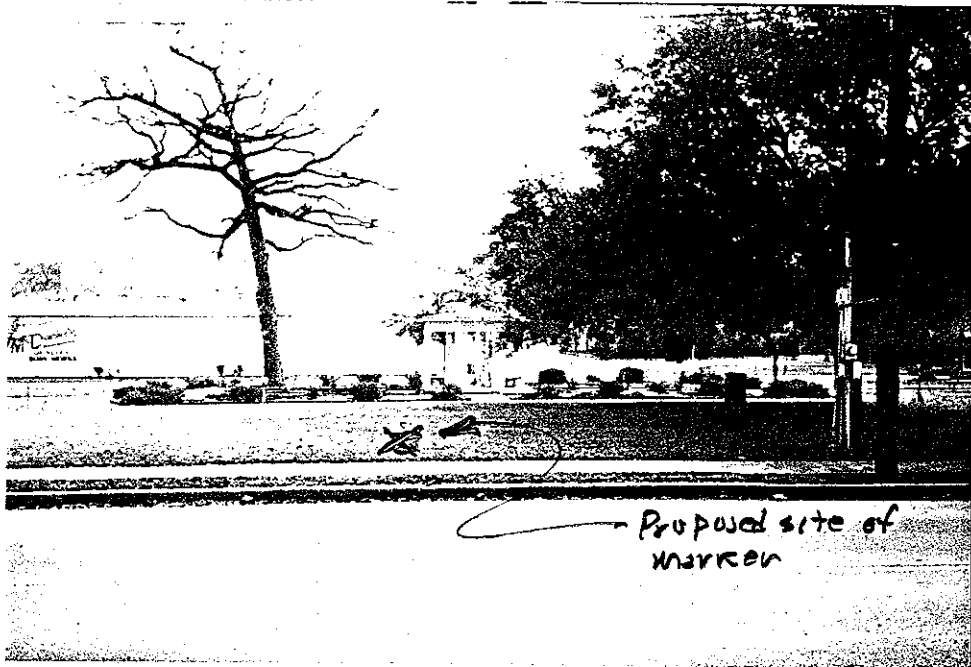
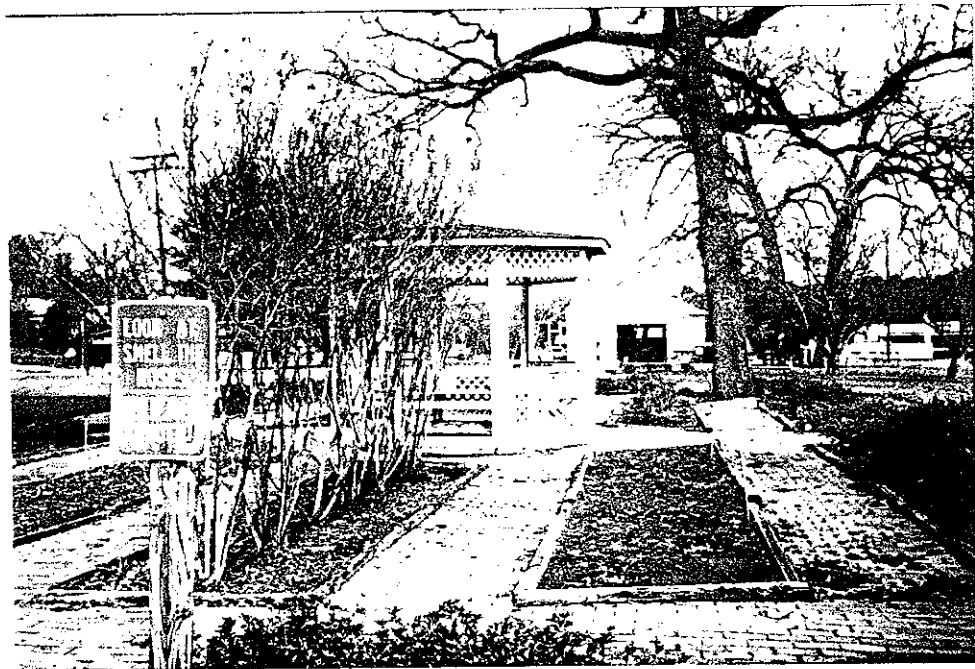
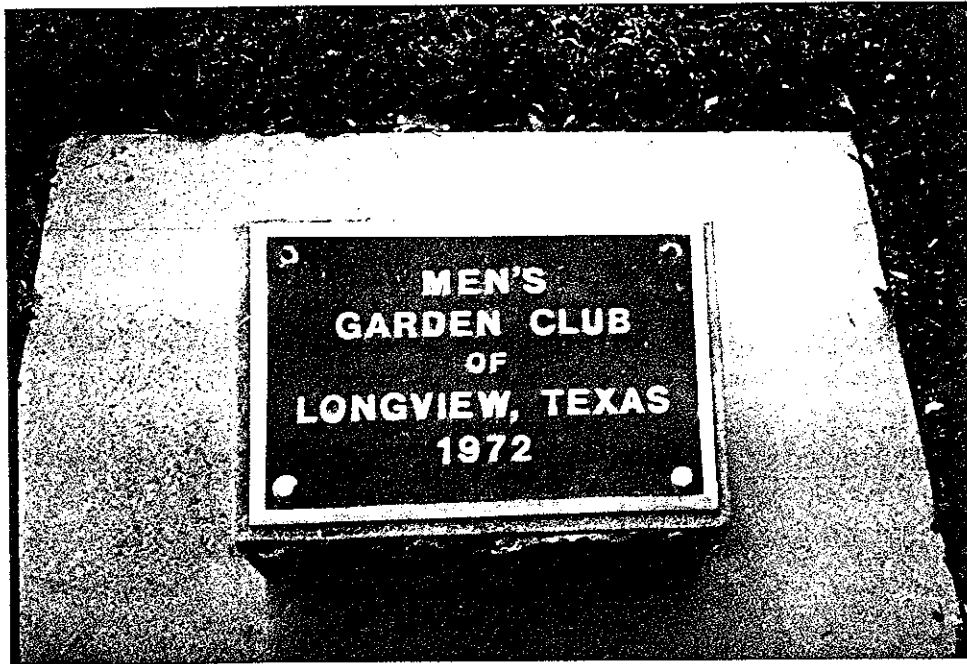
Bethel alternated Sunday services under the brush arbor with St. Mark until Bethel's building was complete in 1874.⁷

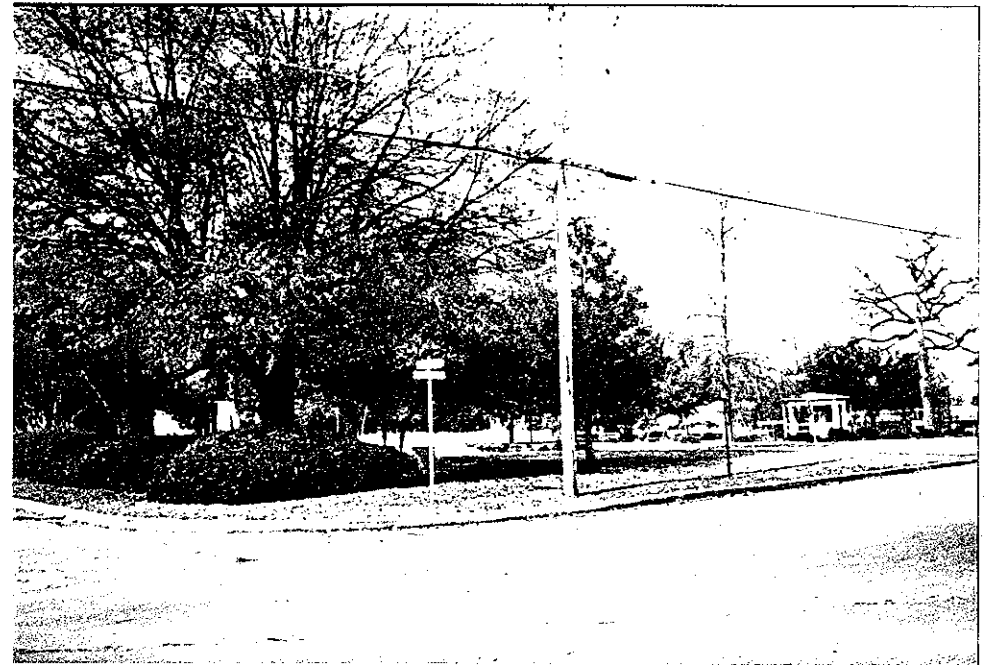
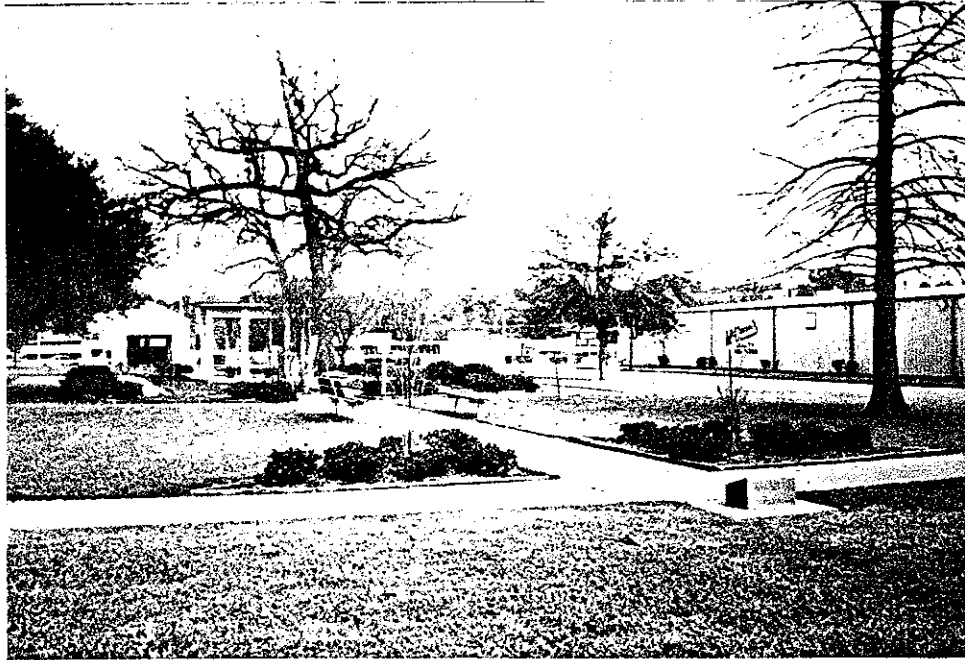
For many years the City of Longview has maintained the block as a city park with walkways, benches and a beautiful gazebo. It is named Magrill Plaza. In the past an occasional band concert was held here as well as other small outdoor ceremonies. A steel pole and lights are erected each year in the form of a twenty-foot Christmas tree illuminated with strands of red lights. In the center of the park, elongated north and south, is a well-maintained rose garden. This was created and cared for by the Longview Men's Garden Club. Although the original grove of trees has been gone for a long time other large trees and shrubs are now on the grounds.

During the early 1930s, at the beginning of the boom of the East Texas Oil Field many oilmen attempted to purchase this acre of land to complete their blocks but all were unsuccessful.⁸ It is doubtful that the unusual title of this historic piece of property will ever change. Its official recognition is long overdue.

⁷ Bethel Missionary Baptist Church History, Gregg County Historical Commission files.

⁸ "Who Owns 'The Grove' ", Longview *Community Press*, Feb. 28, 1985.







"The Grove"
600 N. Green St.
Longview

GREGG.

Magwill Plaza (so designated
by City of Longview - maintains
grounds.

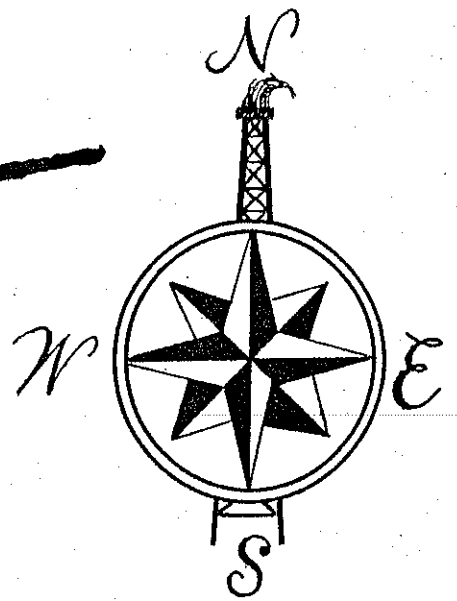
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GREGG COUNTY

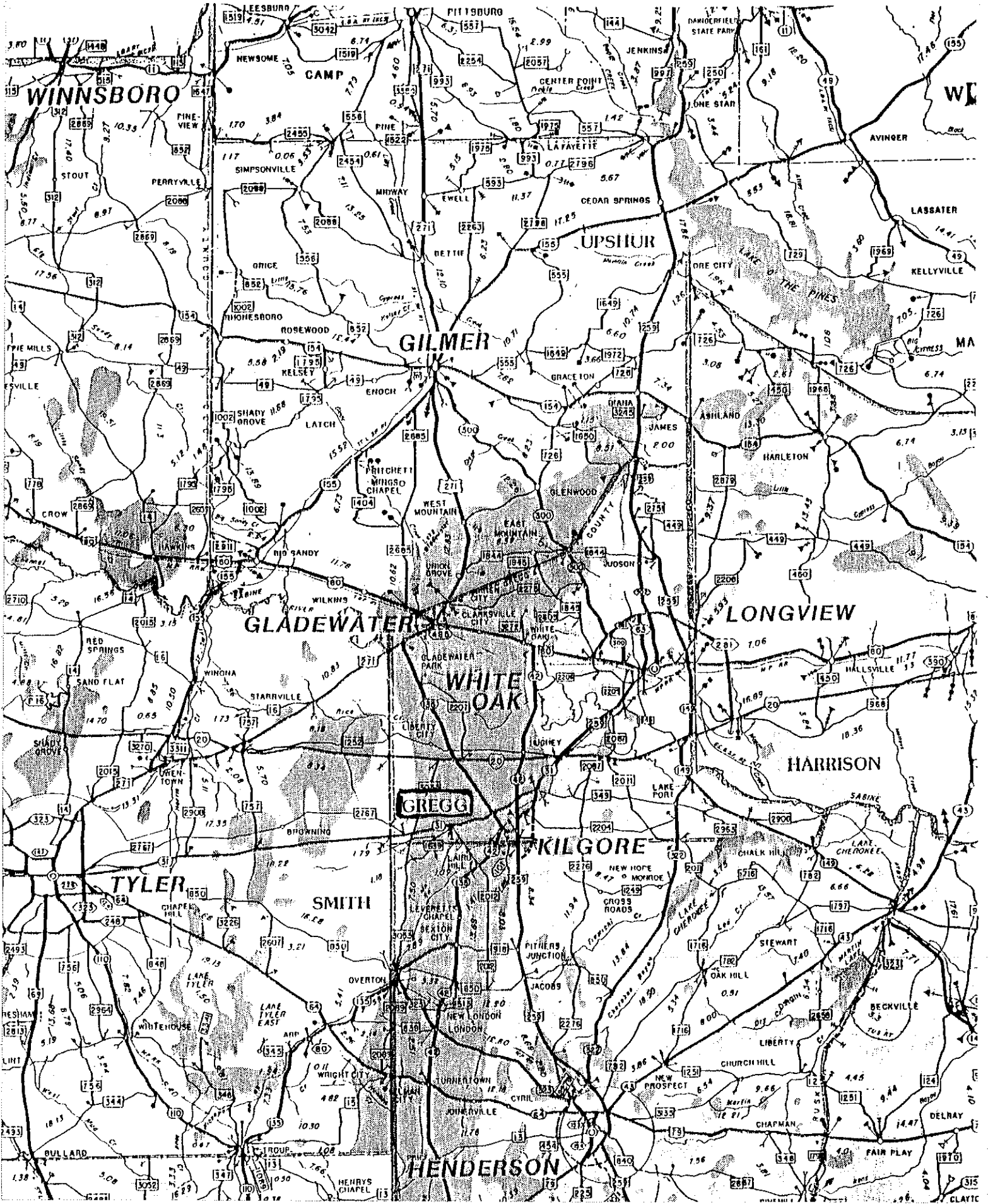
GLADEWATER
LONGVIEW.

KILGORE

TEXAS



GREGG COUNTY





TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR

JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIRMAN

F. LAWRENCE OAKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 11, 2002

Dr. Norman D. Black
417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

We have conducted a preliminary review of the Official Texas Historical Marker application for The Grove. Before we can complete the evaluation, however, we will need some additional information.

1. We would suggest that a search of the Gregg County census be conducted for additional information on John R. Magrill. The census records for 1860, 1870, and 1880 would be of particular interest. A search of Ancestry.com (see enclosed) showed a John B. Magrill born in Upshur County in 1846. Given that Magrill is an unusual name, is it possible that's the same man or at least the same family?
2. We would like to have a copy of the original deed: Vol. N, pp. 229-230.
3. The history notes Magrill conveyed land in 1874 that was platted into Longview Junction. The Handbook of Texas article shows Longview Junction began in 1873. Please clarify the correct date.
4. In order to address significance, we would like to know more about specific events that were held in the park over the years, with special emphasis on the years from the 1880s to the 1940s.
5. We would like a copy of the Community Press article from February 28, 1985. The history does not mention the current owner, but we presume it is the City of Longview. Is that correct?
6. Given the brevity of the history, we believe a small subject marker (18x28) would be more appropriate for the topic. The cost under the new prices would be \$850, compared with \$1250 for the large subject marker (27x42).
7. If Sanborn Fire Insurance Company maps for Longview are available locally, we would like to have copies showing the park's configuration over the years.

Please note this is not a rejection of the application, but simply a request for additional information or clarification. Answers to the above items should be submitted in the form of a *documented addendum* to the original application narrative, including reference notes. We will place the application on hold until we hear from you again. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan".

Dan K. Utley, Historian
Marker Program Coordinator
dan.utley@thc.state.tx.us

Norman Black

From: "Norman Black" <norman.black@co.gregg.tx.us>
To: <cdmagrill@aol.com>
Sent: Saturday, June 08, 2002 6:05 PM
Subject: John R. Magrill information

Dear Mr. Magrill:

I am in the process of getting an Official Texas Historical Marker for Magrill Plaza or "The Grove", as it will be entitled, here in Longview. I have written a paper but with scant information about Mr. Magrill who sold this one acre to the Negroes of Longview in 1870.

I met your cousin, Rose Mary Magrill, recently and she was kind enough to give me some valued and much needed information about Mr. Magrill. She told me you are the unofficial family historian and you might be able to help me further.

Rose Mary stated John R. Magrill is listed in the 1880 census of Hays County as a grocer. She also stated he placed an advertisement in the Texas New Era, the next year, on September 21, 1881, for Magrill and Stansbury, dealers in groceries and provisions.

I am puzzled about his being in Hays County in 1880 and in 1881 placing the ad in the New Era, which I assume to be the paper of the same name in Longview. Do you know where he died and where he is buried?

Any information you might give me will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Norman Black, D.D.S.

6/8/02

Norman Black

From: "Norman Black" <norman.black@co.gregg.tx.us>
To: "Rose Mary Magrill" <rmm@shreve.net>
Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2002 11:16 AM
Subject: Re: John R. Magrill

Dear Rose Mary:

Thank you very much for this much needed information on John R. Magrill. With what you just gave me I doubt I need to contact your cousin in Houston. Thank you for all this and the e-mail address of your cousin. If Dan Utley of the THC needs more I will contact your cousin, David Magrill.

Norman

From: Rose Mary Magrill

To: Norman Black
Sent: Tuesday, April 23, 2002 9:05 AM
Subject: John R. Magrill

Below is information supplied to me recently by my cousin David Magrill, who functions as the unofficial family historian. He lives in Houston and has access to better genealogical sources than the rest of us. If you would like to contact him, his e-mail address is cdmagrill@aol.com. I have not checked any of the citations he supplied (and some bits of information do not have sources cited).

John R. Magrill was born about 1820 in South Carolina. He married Elizabeth A. Thomas, 10 Nov 1842, in Lowndes County, Alabama. (His wife was born Sept. 1820 in South Carolina, the daughter of William Thomas; she died after 1900 in Texas.)

John and his brother Samuel (who also married in Lowndes Co., Ala.) came to Texas in 1845 or 1846. In addition to deeding a piece of property that later became Magrill Plaza, John, at about the same time, deeded a piece of property for the erection of a Methodist Church in the present city of Longview.

John was appointed Confederate Postmaster of Earpville, Texas, on January 24, 1862. On August 12, 1865, a committee in Gilmer recommended to A.J. Hamilton, the Provisional Governor of Texas, that John R. Magrill be appointed a county commissioner. (Source: The Texas Banner, Vol. 1 #25, August 18, 1865)

In March 1872 John sold 244 1/2 acres to the International Railroad Company (International and Great Northern). This tract was located east of Southern Pacific's 150 acres in what is now the city of Longview and extended east to what is now Teague Street. In March 1874, a plat was filed subdividing part of this tract. First Street was laid out along the western edge of that tract. Second through Seventh and Magrill Streets were also created.

John was listed in the 1880 census of Hays County, Texas, as a grocer. He placed an advertisement in "The New Texas Era" (21 Sept 1881) for Magrill and Stansbury, dealers in groceries and provisions. He died 14 March 1899, in Texas. (Elizabeth A. Magrill filed a Confederate Pension Application #5292 as the widow of John R. Magrill. Her application was witnessed by E.S. Stansbury and J.M. Magrill. This application was received in the State Comptroller's Office on 15 Dec 1899 and approved on 5 Feb 1900.)

Now, here are my personal recollections: As a child, I was told that my great-grandfather (Samuel) and his brother used to raise corn where the Gregg County courthouse now stands. When I was about of elementary school age (around 1950 or so), I can remember seeing in the southern part of Longview (at least south of the railroad tracks) a grassy area between two streets at an intersection and being told that there were Magrills buried there. Later, when I looked again for that burial area (there were no stones), I found that whole area paved over. There is, of course, a Magrill Cemetery in Longview (now called Magrill-Moore or something like that), but none of John and Samuel's generation was buried there -- at least with a

4/23/02

marker. In view of my cousin's discovery that John Magrill was living in Hays County in the 1880's, I suppose it is possible that he was buried there. I don't know where David found John's exact death date-- probably from the pension application.

Hope some of this will help. It's all I have at the moment. I enjoyed meeting you in Abilene and hope to become more involved with Gregg County historical research myself in the future.

Rose Mary

4/23/02



TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR

JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIRMAN

F. LAWRENCE OAKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 30, 2003

Dr. Norman Black, Chair
Gregg CHC
417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75602

RE: THE GROVE
18" x 28" marker w/ post; Job # 06602
Shipment to above address, 903/757-2261

Dear Dr. Black:

We have ordered the above-referenced marker for casting. It is currently taking 8 - 12 weeks for delivery from the foundry. **However, this is just an estimate; a final shipment date will depend on the foundry's workload.** A copy of the final inscription as it was sent to the foundry is enclosed for your files. According to our records, the marker should be shipped to the address above. If these instructions have changed during the marker process please let me know as soon as possible so that I may notify the foundry.

If you have not already done so, this would be a good time to begin planning the marker dedication ceremony. However, please avoid setting the dedication date until the marker is received. The estimated shipping date above does not take into account potential shipping problems or other unforeseen delays, and the best laid dedication plans could be upset if planned around this time estimate. We will notify you and all parties listed below once the marker has been shipped from the foundry.

A guide to planning a dedication ceremony is available from our office upon request. Since this is a state program, we suggest that your state senator and/or representative be included in the program, as well as your county judge and commissioners who have appointed your county historical commission. Also enclosed is a form which you may use to let us know your dedication plans; we maintain a list of all upcoming dedications which is distributed to agency commissioners and staff.

Again, please contact me at 512/463-6063 or e-mail me at egina.reyes@thc.state.tx.us if there has been a change in the shipping address, or if you would like a marker dedication guide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Egina".

Egina G. Reyes
Office Manager
History Programs Division

Texas Historical Commission staff (LCH), 2/6/2003, revised 3/19/2003
18" X 28" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Gregg County (Job #06602)

Location: Longview, 600 block of N. Green

Subject codes: AA, PK

UTM ref.: 15 336971E 3596955N

THE GROVE

THE GROVE WAS A NATURAL TIMBER STAND WITHIN WHAT BECAME LONGVIEW IN 1870. TRADITION HOLDS THAT THE AREA'S FREEDMEN GATHERED IN THE GROVE FOR WORSHIP SERVICES AS EARLY AS THE 1860s. IN 1871, JOHN R. MAGRILL SOLD THE ONE-ACRE GROVE TRACT TO THE TOWN'S AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION. ACTING ON THEIR BEHALF WERE O.J. TAYLOR, SILAS BILLUP AND ALICK BERRY. OVER THE YEARS, THE GROVE WAS AN IMPORTANT GATHERING PLACE FOR THE LOCAL AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY. EFFORTS IN THE 1930s TO ACQUIRE THE LAND FOR OIL PRODUCTION FAILED DUE TO CONFUSION OVER THE TITLE, AND THE CITY LATER ADOPTED THE LAND FOR USE AS A PARK, NOW KNOWN AS MAGRILL PLAZA.

(2003)





4019 Cedar Forest
Kingwood, Texas 77339

June 12, 2002

Norman Black, DDS
417 S. Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Dear Dr. Black:

Thank you for your interest in getting an Official Texas Historical Marker for "The Grove". Hopefully I can provide some information about John R. Magrill who provided the land for this park. We believe that he was our great-great-uncle, the brother of our great-grandfather Samuel D. Magrill.

John R. Magrill (1820-1899) was born in South Carolina and came to Upshur County (now Gregg County), Texas by way of Alabama in 1845 or 1846. He married Elizabeth A. Thomas, 10 Nov 1842 in Lowndes County, Alabama. They had seven children. John was a farmer and acquired a lot of timbered property in and around present day Longview. Around 1850? (1870?) he deeded a piece of property known as "The Grove" to "all persons of African descent in Upshur County." The Negroes of the area had no suitable place to worship, and John deeded the piece of land so they could build what was then known as a meeting house. It was used by members of all denominations. At about the same time John deeded a piece of property for the erection of a Methodist Church in the present city of Longview.

John Magrill was appointed Confederate Postmaster of Earpville (later named Longview) on 24 Jan 1862. He served as a courier in the Confederate States Army. Following the civil war a committee met in Gilmer to make recommendation to the Provisional Governor of Texas for appointments to local offices. John was nominated, among others, for County Commissioner. In March, 1872, John Magrill sold 244 ½ acres to the International Railroad Company (International and Great Northern). This tract was located east of Southern Pacific's 150 acres in what is now the City of Longview and extended East to what is now Teague Street. In March, 1874, a plat was filed subdividing

part of this tract. First Street was laid out along the western edge of that tract. Second through Seventh and Magrill Streets were also created. This area became known as the Longview Junction neighborhood.

John Magrill and his family moved with two of his sons-in law, Dr. Leander D. Stansbury and W.T. Whitelock, Sr., and lived for a while in San Marcos, Hays County, Texas where he was a grocer before returning to Longview in 1881. He died 14 Mar 1899 in Longview.

I do not know where John is buried. His grave may be unmarked. He has no living "Magrill" descendants that I know of. There may be some Stansbury and Whitelock descendants still in the Longview area. I have gleaned this material from several sources over the years and am most indebted to Sharon Pierce (tsfw@aol.com) and Elaine Martin (McStumped@cox-internet.com) for their Gregg and Upshur Counties pages on The Texas GenWeb Project. If I can be of further help to you, please do not hesitate to call on me.


David Magrill



TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

RICK PERRY, GOVERNOR

JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIRMAN

F. LAWRENCE OAKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 22, 2002

Dr. Norman Black, Chair
Gregg CHC
417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75602

RE: THE GROVE
18" x 28" subject marker w/ post
Job # 06602; Gregg County

Dear Dr. Black:

I am pleased to notify you that the Texas Historical Commission has approved the above-referenced topic for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

Payment for the marker, in the amount of \$850.00, is now due. Please complete and return the enclosed payment form at your earliest convenience. Once payment for the marker is received, your application will be placed in line to have the marker inscription written. The inscription will not be written until after funds have been received. When the text is prepared, a copy will be sent to you and any parties listed below for review and approval.

The Texas Historical Commission congratulates you on your efforts to record and preserve Texas history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dan".

Dan K. Utley
Historical Marker Program Coordinator
History Programs Division
dan.utley@thc.state.tx.us

August 8, 2002

THE GROVE

The City of Longview has demolished the gazebo which was in need of repairs. The new gazebo is almost completed by workmen of the City of Longview. It is very similar to the former gazebo. The workmen told me they found in a book on gazebos one that would be appropriate for the replacement. The new one is on the same concrete slab as the gazebo being replaced. The entire structure is made of wood. The roofing is not yet completed.



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

AUGUST 24, 2002

Dan K. Utley
Historical Marker Program Coordinator
History Programs Division
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

Re: The Grove H.M., Job # 06602, Gregg County

Dear Dan:

I apologize for not responding sooner to the approval of this application. Also, I cannot find a record of my having advised you about the replacement of the gazebo on the property. I actually thought I had told you about this. The gazebo was in need of some wood and paint repairs but before I knew it the City of Longview had demolished it and was almost finished with a fine, almost identical replacement. This morning I was very pleased to see the enclosed article in the Longview *News-Journal*. I must write a nice letter to this roofing company. I really do like the copper roof: it was done shingle-like in a very professional manner. The age of the first gazebo is unknown to me but I did not consider it historic.

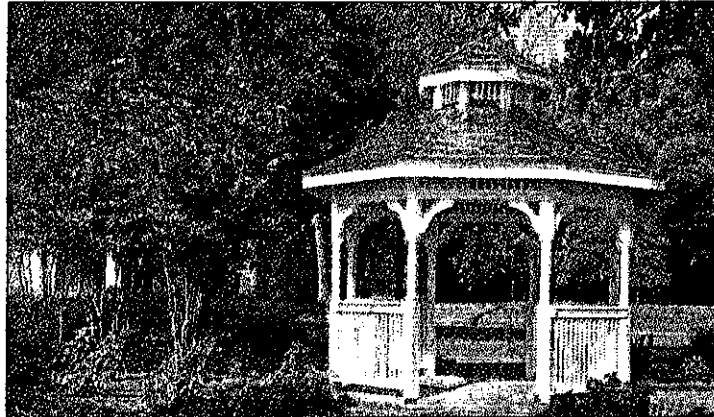
I assigned W. A. Williams the project of collecting funds for the marker from as many of the black churches in Longview as he can. As you realize this could be a slow process and if it drags on very long or is incomplete I have funds in my budget to take care of the remainder. Willie wants me to make some flyers to give him for distribution. I am waiting on him to get me a draft of the flyer and will telephone him in a few minutes. My thoughts are that it would be good for the community and historical preservation to involve as much of the African American community as possible.

Incidentally, the grounds really do look good at this time. The rose garden has many and varied blooming flowers. I don't think I mentioned it in the narrative but among the trees there is a fine bald cypress. People do not seem to plant these fine trees as much as they once did and I think the average person believes they grow only on Caddo Lake or other marshlands. They grow very well here "on dry land".

Dan, thank you once again for your fine work and interest in Gregg County and East Texas.

Sincerely,

Enc.



Darlene Chapman-Davis/News-Journal Photo

The Magrill Plaza gazebo in downtown Longview has a new copper roof thanks to Fuller Sheet Metal.

Company donates roof for downtown gazebo

FROM STAFF REPORTS

The Magrill Plaza gazebo in downtown Longview has a new copper roof thanks to Fuller Sheet Metal.

Fuller Sheet Metal owner Chris Fuller recently noticed the city's maintenance and operation crews building a new gazebo at the park on North Green Street, the city reported. The old structure had deteriorated and needed replacement.

Fuller asked about the type of roof that would be put on the new structure. When he learned of plans to put a shingled roof on the gazebo, he offered to donate materials and labor for a copper roof.

The donation makes the business the most recent to contribute to the city's Partnerships for Public Spaces Program. Fuller

started construction Thursday, and it appeared completed Friday.

City officials said they are pleased with Fuller's "generous donation," saying it will give the gazebo a long-lasting, high-quality roof that will be attractive to the many people who use the park or pass it every day.

Parks and Recreation Director Laura Hill said, "Mr. Fuller's willingness to assist in improving our community's assets is an outstanding example of community pride."

A plaque will be placed on the gazebo recognizing the gift, which has an estimated value of \$6,000.

For information about how to participate in the Partnerships for Public Spaces Program, call the city of Longview volunteer coordinator at 237-1390.



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

November 21, 2002

Reverend H. C. Rockmore, Sr.
Pastor
Red Oak Missionary Baptist Church
P. O. Box 12313
Longview, Texas 75607

Dear Rev. Rockmore:

On behalf of the Gregg County Historical Commission and the Texas Historical Commission I want to thank you and the Red Oak Missionary Baptist Church for the wonderful support you have extended toward historical preservation. Specifically, the check in the amount of \$850.00 for the cost of the historical marker for The Grove, is a fine expression of your awareness of the importance of this historic site.

When we have the dedication ceremony for the historical marker I would like it very much if you would deliver the invocation. The marker has to be cast and the ceremony is probably three months in the future.

Thank you again for your kind assistance.

Sincerely,

Norman Black, D.D.S.

xc: W. A. Williams

June 24, 2003

PHOTOGRAPHIC NOTES MADE OF
BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS
OF THE GAZEBO IN
THE GROVE

Mr. Charlie Shaw was resting on a bench inside the gazebo when these pictures were made at 1:30 P.M. today. He is knowledgeable of the history of The Grove, which he called this block. He told me he remembers the kindergarten located about the middle of the area, about the location of the gazebo. He remember Mrs. Sally Moore was the {director} of the school. He also said he believes Rev. Henry Rockmore knows Mrs. Moore's daughter.



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

July 4, 2003

Dear Commission Member:

After many years of procrastination, some of it due to lack of research material, we finally will dedicate the Official Texas Historical Marker for "The Grove". Most of you will remember that John R. Magrill, in 1870, when Longview was founded and still in Upshur County, sold, not gave as tradition had it, this one-acre tract of land to "The Negroes of Longview" to be used for religious, school and meeting purposes.

The dedication will be at 10:00 A.M., Friday, July 18th on the block known as Magrill Plaza, corner of North Green and Padon Streets. Years ago I said I would never schedule another marker dedication in the summer but here we are. However, the ceremony will take place in the shade and should last no longer than twenty minutes. Our own Willie A. Williams will give the brief address (no band, no color guard, etc.). Mayor Murray Moore will give an also brief welcome.

I know of no other piece of land collectively owned by a large group of people and for this and the obvious historical significance of the site it will indeed be an historical event. I hope all of you can attend.

Best regards.



Gregg County Historical Commission

Norman W. Black, D.D.S.
Chairman

417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, Texas 75602

Phone 903-757-2261
Fax # 903-753-5337

July 7, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

An Official Texas Historical Marker for "The Grove" will be dedicated be at 10:00 A.M., Friday, July 18th at Magrill Plaza, North Green and Padon Streets in Longview. The Texas Historical Commission and the Gregg County Historical Commission will sponsor this event which commemorates the deeding of this one-acre block to the African-American people of Longview by John R. Magrill in 1870.

This is a very unusual situation in which the land is not owned by an individual or governmental entity but an entire segment of the community. Magrill wanted this group to have a permanent site to meet, worship and perhaps have a school. This was the northwest corner of a tract of land Magrill owned and later sold to the International Railroad. This tract adjoining the new City of Longview was later to be known as Longview Junction. This first structure erected here was a brush arbor and was used by the church that later became St. Mark C.M.E. church.

The ceremony is free of charge and open to the public. Everyone is invited to attend this brief dedication.

Plaza to get historical marker

Magrill land downtown was meeting, worship site for blacks in 1800s

By **PATRINA A. BOSTIC**
pbostic@longview-news.com

A piece of downtown Longview sold to blacks in 1870 for a place to meet and worship will become an official part of Texas and Gregg County history.

The Texas Historical Commission and the Gregg County Historical Commission will dedicate a historical marker July 18 at the site located at the intersection of Padon and Green streets.

John R. Magrill agreed to

sell the land — now called Magrill Plaza — to blacks so they could have a place to congregate.

The first church services were held under a brush arbor used by two or more congregations, according to information collected by the Gregg County Historical Commission. Also, Magrill thought the land could be used as a site for schooling, if needed.

Blacks called the ground “The Meeting Place,” and later referred to it as “The Groves,” said Norman W.

Black, chairman of the Gregg County Historical Commission.

The land deal came five years after blacks who were held as slaves in Texas received news of emancipation, which occurred on June 19, 1865.

“It’s really an interesting piece of ground, and I think it’s long overdue,” for receiving a historic marker, Black said. “I’ve been around for a long time and have never run across a tract of land done this

See *PLAZA*, Page 4B

Plaza

From Page 1B

way, but I’m sure there are others in the South.”

Black said he had been stymied in his efforts to find records dating back to the sale until he located Magrill’s great-great-niece, Rose Mary Magrill of Marshall, who provided him with family history and documentation that he could submit to the Texas Historical Commission.

The land was sold to blacks for \$40 an acre, he said, which was a great deal of money in those days.

“It’s a beautiful little place,”

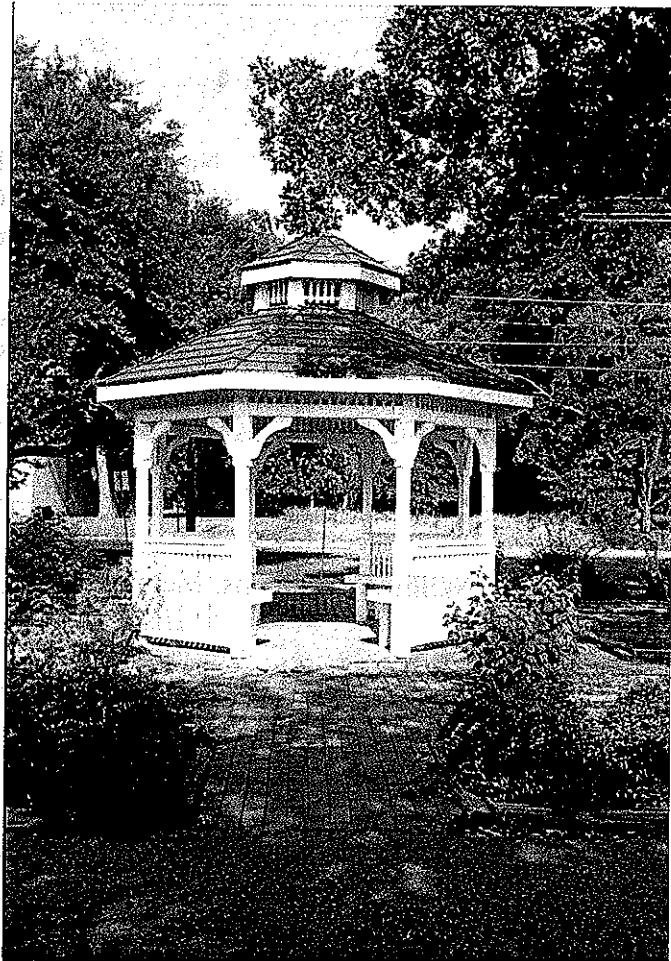
Black said.

He expects the dedication will be widely attended by black congregations.

Longview Mayor Murray Moore will give a welcoming speech, the Rev. Homer Rockmore of Red Oak Missionary Baptist Church will give the invocation and Willie A. Williams, a member of the Gregg County Historical Commission, will present a brief history of the site.

The public is invite to attend the event, which commences at 10 a.m. July 18.

On the Net: www.thc.state.tx.us



DEDICATION
of an
OFFICIAL TEXAS HISTORICAL MARKER

THE GROVE

Friday, July 18, 2003

10:00 A.M.

North Green and Padon Streets

Sponsored by

THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

and

THE GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

GREGG COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT

Bill Stoudt, County Judge
Charles Davis, Commissioner Pct. 1
Daryl Primo, Commissioner Pct. 2
Bob Barbee, Commissioner Pct. 3
Danny Craig, Commissioner Pct. 4

GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Dr. Norman Black, Chairman
Sue Martin Brown
Jack Buchanan
Pauline Cox
Mrs. B. W. Crain, Jr.
Beth Holloway Dodson
Helen McHaney Griffin
Carol Morris Little
Virginia Long
Anne P. Mackenzie
Nauty Byrd Mayer
Amanda Pratt Nobles
Dr. W. D. Northcutt, III
Mrs. John W. Osteen
Harold R. Wells
Joe White
W. A. Williams

PROGRAM

Master of Ceremonies

Norman Black, D.D.S.,
Chairman, Gregg County
Historical Commission

Invocation

Rev. H. C. Rockmore, Pastor,
Red Oak Missionary Baptist Church

Welcome

Honorable Murray Moore, Mayor of Longview

Introduction of Guests

Norman Black

Address

Willie A. Williams, Member, Gregg County
Historical Commission

Dedication of Marker

Mr. Williams

Unveiling of Marker

Evelyn Williams and Rose Mary Magrill

Reading of Text of Marker

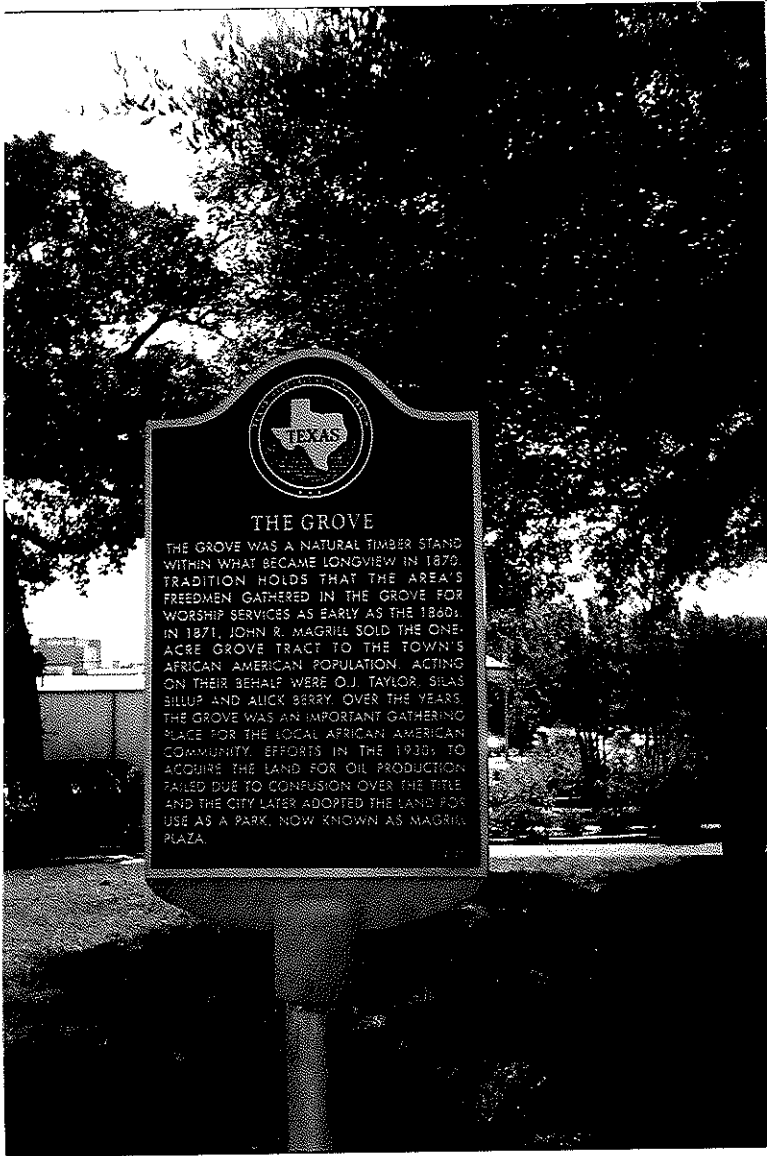
Clifford Stewart, L.I.S.D., Retired

Benediction

Rev. Rockmore







Historical marker unveiled at Longview's Magrill Plaza

Land once haven, place of worship for area's freed slaves

By **MELISSA TRESNER**
mtresner@longview-news.com

It was a safe haven and a place of worship and schooling for freed slaves in the 1860s, and on Friday it became an official part of history.

The Texas Historical Commission and the Gregg County Historical Commission held a ceremony Friday morning for the dedication of a marker at Magrill Plaza.

About 30 spectators sought comfort from the midmorning

heat under the shade of large trees and the plaza's gazebo. The piece of land was known as "The Meeting Place" and "The Grove" to blacks who first worshipped there 140 years ago.

Mayor Murray Moore attended the event and thanked the commission for its efforts in preserving the history of Longview and Gregg County.

"As far back as we know, this piece of land has always been used by blacks," said Willie A. Williams.

See *DEDICATION, Page 5A*



Kevin Green/News-Journal Photo

Evelyn Williams, left, of St. Mark CME Church, and Rose Mary Magrill, center, unveil a marker Friday commemorating Longview's Magrill Plaza.

Dedication

From Page 1A

Williams, a member of the Gregg County Historical Commission, said the one-acre tract was sold to Longview's blacks in 1870 by John R. Magrill.

Magrill, who sold the land for \$40, faced persecution from some fellow whites in Longview for sympathizing with freed slaves.

In the 1930s, there were efforts by some oil investors to purchase the land, but there was confusion about the land's title.

The city of Longview later adopted it for use as a park, Williams said.

Evelyn Williams, a member of St. Mark's Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, has traced her congregation's history to the spot.

A third-generation member, Evelyn Williams said church services were held under an arbor at a time when blacks could not stand on the streets throughout the city.

Evelyn Williams, along with her granddaughter, Kirby Adkins, and Rose Mary Magrill, the great-great niece of John Magrill, unveiled the marker at Friday's ceremony.

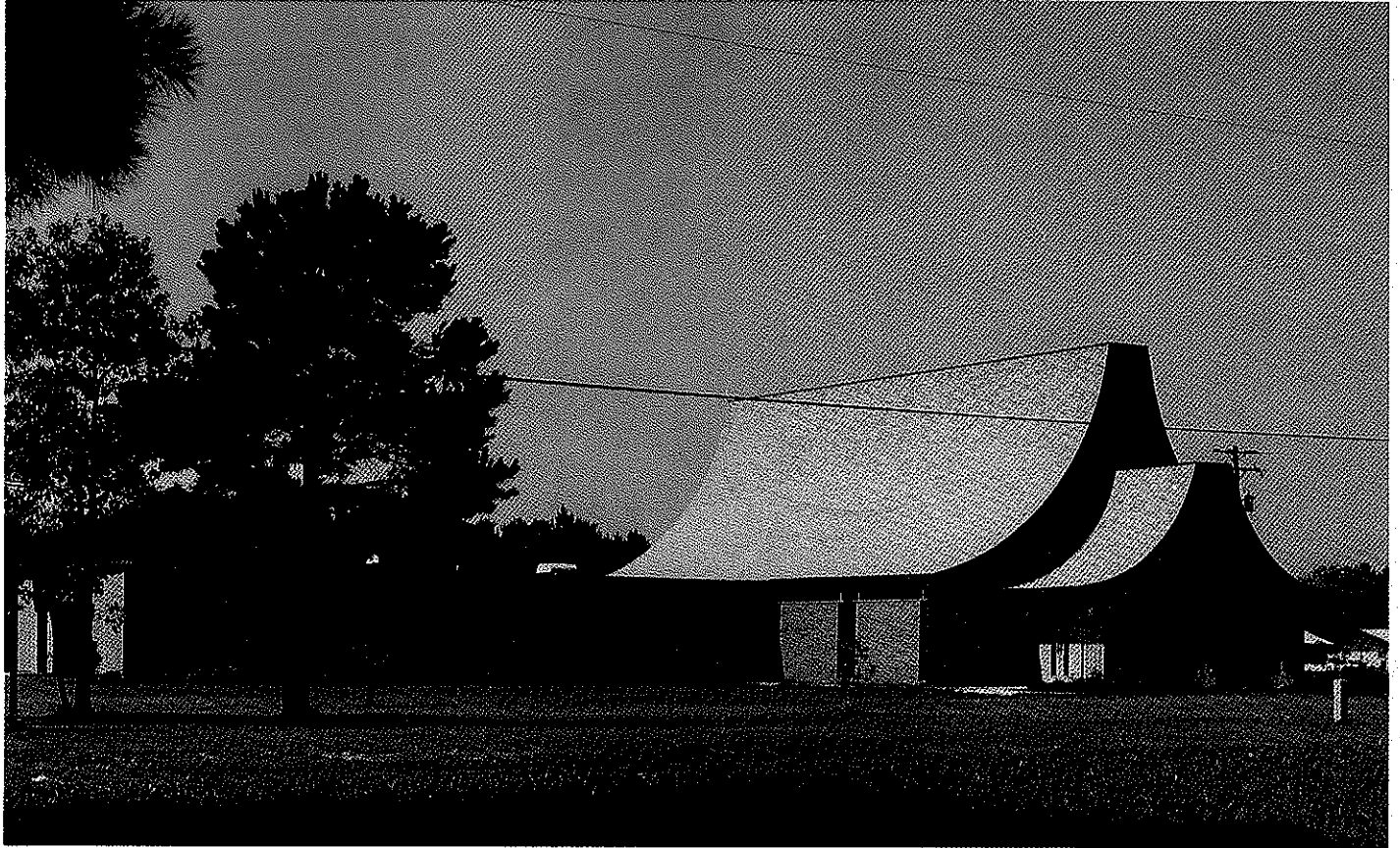
will be used continuously for the
channel open.

JOHN R. MAGRELL DEAD.

**Fifteen of the Pallbearers Aggregated
One Thousand Years of Life.**

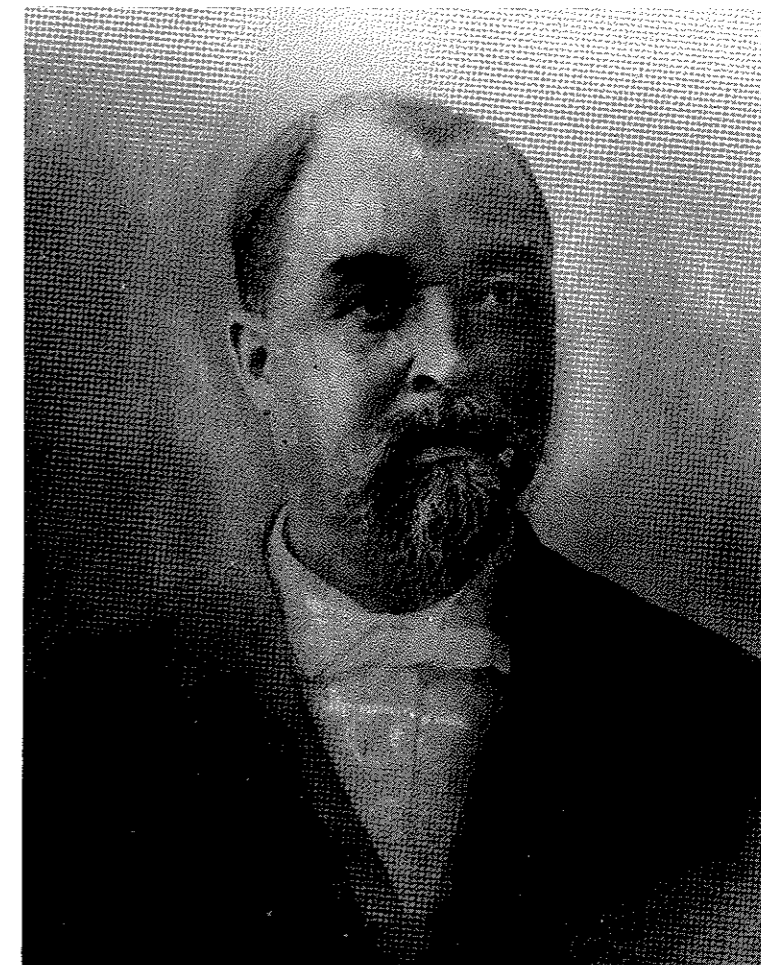
Langney, Tex., March 14.—John R. Magrell, one of the oldest inhabitants by many years, died here last night. He was 81 years old last January, and has lived here fifty-three years. He fought in the civil war and filled offices of public trust, and was in the mercantile business up to six months ago. Everyone knew and loved "Uncle Johnny," as he was familiarly called by all. He had been a member of the Methodist church fifty years when he died. His funeral was largely attended. The pall-bearers were chosen from the oldest inhabitants and friends. Fifteen of them aggregated 1000 years of life, and it was a touching sight to see these hoary-headed men march beside the remains of their old comrade.

BONHAM BUDGET.



St. Mark C.M.E. Church

FOUNDER



Rev. Robert A. Hagler

SAINT MARK CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Longview, Gregg County, Texas

**A history of the facts and ideas underlying
the establishment and the development
of this church**

by

Willie Alvin Williams

Typing and Printing
by
Shirley Bell McClain

August 15, 1986

Longview, Texas

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SAINT MARK CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by Willie Alvin Williams

The beginning of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church lay in the controversial slave issue of the Ante Bellum days. The slave issue involved the effects of slavery on the labor market, politics, national expansion, religion, and (perhaps, least) morals. The constant increase of the slave population and skilled laborers in it had greatly increased unemployment among the free people. Politicians were divided on the question of slavery in the proposed new states, and efforts in congress to stop the growth of slavery added fuel to the idea of a divided nation. The Methodist Church, by adopting "a gag rule"¹ in 1840 prevented further discussion of slavery in its congregations, but in 1844 Love united Bishop James O. Andrews and a Georgia slave owning lady.² The only problem was that Georgia state law prevented the southern "lady" from learning to handle the slaves (and business administration). Well, the "gag rule" and the bishop were suspended, and in 1845, 460,000 members declared themselves independent and formed the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.³ The

¹"Methodism," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol 15, Chicago, 1966, 305.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

124,961 slave members never knew what happened. The moral issue, somehow, seemed to fade among the other issues; legally there could be no question of morals between master and slave since the slave was not a human being--he was cattle. From these little problems the subtle but obedient slaves caused division among the states and the religious groups, and from these divisions and a major war came the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the parent body of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.

In 1860 the slave membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church South had reached 207,766.⁴

With the intervention of the war, 1861-1865, the problems were solved except one, politics. But many new problems arose with the fall of slavery. The slaves were free, and they had to prove to each other and themselves their new found freedom primarily by drifting from place to place (and without a written pass over the owner's signature). Whites were replaced by ex-slaves in many political offices in the south, and the whites sought revenge by abusing many blacks. Above all poverty was every where south.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, felt that these developments in the social, economic, and political life of the blacks could be served better by separating or segregating the blacks. The 1866 General Conference in New Orleans⁵ of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South decided that a

⁴Britannica, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

⁵Othal Hawthorne Lakey, The History of the CME Church, Memphis, The CME Publishing House, 1985, pp. 24-25.

separate church (denomination) must be formed and staffed for and by the ex-slaves. The College of Bishops reported to the 1870 General Conference that

Between 1866 and 1870 five annual conferences and forty-five presiding elders districts composed . . . exclusively of colored members had been created.⁶

A general conference was scheduled immediately for the "colored" members to be held during the same year. On December 16, 1870⁷ the first general conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church met in Jackson, Mississippi. Bishop Robert Paine of the parent body (Methodist Episcopal Church, South) was the presiding bishop of this "organizing general conference." During this session William H. Miles of Kentucky and Richard H. Vanderhorst of Georgia⁸ were elected the first bishops of this new church.

In 1871 Bishop William H. Miles came to Marshall, Texas, and organized the East Texas Annual Conference,⁹ making it the "Mother Conference" of the Texas Episcopal District. Leaving Marshall the Bishop went to Waxahachie, Texas, and organized the Northwest Texas Conference. Between the two conferences, seven presiding elders' districts were created.

The late Carrie Bolden White, 1880 - 1974, related (as it was told to her) the origin of the first church for

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸Othal Hawthorne Lakey, The Rise of "Colored Methodism" Dallas, Crescendo Book Publications, 1972, p. 109.

⁹Lakey, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

"colored" people in this area¹⁰ (now Gregg County, Texas). It was told to her that the freedmen built a brush arbor (an upright structure without walls and a roof of cut branches from green trees), under which religious services were conducted from 1867 to 1876. This structure was located on the corner of what is now First Street and Padon Street in Longview. In 1867 this area was located in the south-east corner of Upshur County;¹¹ Gregg County was created from Rusk and Upshur Counties in 1873.¹²

How long the ex-slaves (politely referred to as freedmen)¹³ had been using the location commonly referred to as a meeting place is not clear. Carrie White said the Freedmen were meeting there in 1867,¹⁴ and one may assume they had been meeting there as slaves, perhaps before the end of the war. John R. Magrill, who sold the church site to the Freedman,¹⁴ was a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and this, too, raises the possibility of the slaves having used this "meeting place" before the end of the Civil War.

From 1867 (?) to 1874 the number of ministers in the Colored Methodist Church was very small for two reasons: (1) in the slave states slaves nor freedmen of color were allowed to serve as ministers from c.1835 to close of the war, and

¹⁰Evelyn Garrett Williams, "History of Saint Mark CME Church as told by Carrie Bolden White", Longview, Unpublished, 1972.

¹¹Texas Almanac, Sesquicentennial Edition, Gregg County, A. H. Belo Corp., Dallas, 1985, p. 364.

¹²Ibid., p. 291.

¹³Williams, *op. cit.*

¹⁴John R. Magrill, *op. cit.*

(2) the education of slaves was also prohibited by law. Therefore, there is no record of any preacher being assigned to Saint Mark CME Church (Freedmen's Church) until 1874.

It is possible that the Right Reverend Robert A. Hagler frequently ministered to the spiritual needs of the church in Longview during 1873. After a one year assignment by Reverend M. F. Jamison in 1874, Reverend Hagler was assigned to Saint Mark and remained as its pastor until 1880.¹⁵ It was under his guidance that the first church building was completed in 1876-1877. Reverend M. F. Jamison refers to Reverend Hagler as being a minister at the beginning of the Texas Annual Conference at Sherman in January, 1874:

Among the members of that conference were Moses Butler. . .Robert Hagler. . .¹⁶

The Reverend M. F. Jamison was ordained at the 1874 Conference in Sherman:

I passed a very poor examination before the committee; but as that was common in those days, the committee asked that I be admitted and ordained a deacon.¹⁷

In his autobiography the Reverend Jamison talks freely about his marriage immediately following the conference, and he casually mentions his assignment:

Returning from conference, I was married to Miss (Minerva A.) Flinnoy on January 14, 1874. This course was decided upon for mutual happiness

¹⁵Ruth A. Whitaker, "Souvenir Program of the Dedication of Saint Mark CME Church, Longview, Hudson Printing Company, 1972, p. 4.

¹⁶M. F. Jamison, *Autobiography of Bishop M. F. Jamison, D.D.*, Nashville, Publishing House of the M.E. Church, South, Smith and Lamar Publishing Agents, 1912, p. 81.

¹⁷Ibid.

and self protection during the remaining days of my life. We succeeded splendidly during the first years of our married life. We raised six bales of cotton and I rode the Marshall and Longview Stations as pastor.¹⁸

For at least nine years, 67-76, it seems, the Saint Mark Colored Methodist Episcopal Church members and supporters worshipped in the open air under a brush arbor:

The bishop assigned me to the Marshall and Longview Stations in 1874. We had five members in Marshall and eight in Longview when I entered the charge but no church (building) at either place. When I had finished the year's work, I had forty members in Longview and twenty in Marshall.¹⁹

The first Saint Mark Church building was completed in late 1876 or early 1877, and the East Texas Annual Conference was invited to meet there. The Reverend M. F. Jamison, who was then a presiding elder in the Northwest Texas Conference, visited the conference and wrote:

The East Texas Conference convened at Longview in November, 1877, with Bishop Beebe presiding. I had once served that people (Longview, Saint Mark) as their first pastor, and now I met with the kindest greetings.²⁰

Local church history does not list many details of Saint Mark's first church building, but for a people who had never owned a church building, it must have been grand. That first church structure was described as

A two story box house, forty feet wide and sixty feet long, the upstairs used for meeting of the U.B.F. Lodge. They worshipped there

¹⁸Jamison, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 83.

²⁰Ibid., p. 101.

until 1893 when it was torn down and a frame building was erected.²¹

The name Hagler again appears in Bishop Jamison's autobiography, and justly so because the Reverend had apparently officially organized Saint Mark as a Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in 1873 and presented it to the Sherman Annual Conference in January, 1874 for pastoral supply.²² In 1877 Reverend Hagler invited the East Texas Annual Conference to assemble in Longview at Saint Mark in its new 40 x 60, two story, box house. Bishop Jamison wrote:

Reverends William Taylor, Moses Butler, Daniel Mimms, Cyrus Wolf, Robert A. Hagler and John Williams were large window lights in that conference.²³

The first pastoral residence was completed in 1916, and it was destroyed by fire. The second residence was completed in 1945.²⁴ The present parsonage was completed in 1972 after the church building had been relocated at 1100 Sapphire Street, Longview.

The present Saint Mark Church home was completed in 1972. This modern building highlights a sanctuary with laminated beams which lift the interior apex to a height of thirty-five feet above the floor. The interior finish is brick and cedar brightened by natural light filtered through plastic amber colored twelve inch panel windows and a thirty inch wide artificial sky light extending the entire length of

²¹Williams, op. cit.

²²Jamison, op. cit., p. 83.

²³Ibid., p. 101.

²⁴Williams, op. cit.

sanctuary ceiling. A tinted glass panel window with a crafted cross center expresses a spiritual church spire that can be seen inside with day light and outside at night when interior lights are on. The exterior finish of sanctuary and educational wing is brick and natural cedar. The church structure is balanced on a two and one half acre well groomed campus.

The May, 1954 General Conference of the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church officially deleted the word "Colored" and added in the same position the word "Christian."²⁵ The name since then has been the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

O. J. Taylor, Silas (Cilas) Billup, and Alick Berry²⁶ signed the instrument acknowledging the purposes set forth in the transfer of the ownership of the property to the freedmen.

I, John R. Magrill. . .in consideration of the sum of forty dollars in spices paid me by the Colored people in and around Longview. . .have. . .conveyed to them their heirs. . .one acre of land in the afore-said state and county near Longview. . .to have and to hold. . .for the use only of church and school. . . Signed sealed and delivered in presence of

John R. Magrill

O. J. Taylor
Silas Billup
Alick Berry²⁷

History has not been very kind to men like O. J. Taylor, Silas Billup, and Alick Berry. None of the forefathers of present day Saint Mark had passed those names on to their descendants. Evelyn Garrett Williams, a second generation member, while collecting information on other real estate

²⁵Lakey, op. cit., p. 3.

²⁶Magrill, op. cit., p. 530.

²⁷John R. Magrill, op. cit., pp. 529-530.

property in Upshur County, Texas, Records, found herself looking at a description of property known as Magrill Park. Black people had used Magrill Park as long as any living person can remember, and no one ever stated why, and Saint Mark's famous brush arbor and first building were located there. The names of these three men were written as witnesses on page 530, Volume N.²⁸

O. J. Taylor, Silas (Cilas) Billup, and Alick Berry had been asleep for 101 years. The people of present day Gregg County are deeply indebted to them for the location of a very beautiful rose garden in summer and a giant Christmas tree for every Yuletide season. Eventually, Saint Mark hopes to discover what happened to O. J. Taylor and Alick Berry so that the people of this area can say that all three men are awake and remembered.

The name "Billup" was known in this area, and very soon Evelyn Williams located Charlie Wixx, Jr.,²⁹ the grandson of Cilas (Silas) Billup, a lifetime resident of Longview, and a person who was instrumental in the integration of U.S. Postal employees in Longview. After the Baptist organized under the same "Brush Arbor" described earlier, the Billup family associated with it and became pioneers in the establishment of the first Baptist church for blacks (Bethel) in the Longview area.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Cilas Billup, Genealogical Chart, attached.

In spite of the literacy level and the methods of keeping and storing records, three names³⁰ of early church officers have been passed on in the church's verbal history. Jerry Lampkins, the great grandfather of Altha Dean Bush,³¹ was one of the first trustees of Saint Mark.³² Reverend Wade Hamilton, who later became a CME minister, and John Crisp (Criss) were two of the first stewards³³ of Saint Mark. Reverend Hamilton was the grandfather-in-law of Kathleen Ross.³⁴ John Crisp was the great grand uncle of Evelyn Williams.³⁵

Genealogical charts I - X were restricted to families who have been active directly and indirectly for at least five generations. These "first" families were instrumental in the development of the community as well as the church itself. These charts show all of the descendants known to the source(s) listed on bottom of chart, and these charts, in no way, imply the religious preference of each person listed.

The Boyce O. Jones family are descendants of Joe Walter Hagler in Chart I; Boyce Jones is currently the church treasurer. The Saint Mark music department is headed by

³⁰Leslie J. White, Church Calendar: "107th Commemoration Service," East Texas Times, Raymond Campbell, Publisher, Longview, Texas, March 21, 1979.

³¹Genealogical Chart IX, attached.

³²White, Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

Sidney Bell Willis and the financial is Shirley Bell McClain; both are descendants of William and Martha Malone in Chart III. Kathleen Ross is the granddaughter of Crecia Smith in Chart IV. Augustus White and Carrie Bolden White of Chart V were the parents of Wilma White Griffin. Florence L. Jackson worship service hostess and announcing clerk is the granddaughter of Manuel Eaton and Celia Dickerson Eaton in Chart VI. The pianist for the Sunday school assemblies, Kasha Williams, is the great, great granddaughter of Dave and Mary Crisp Garrett of Chart VIIa-b. Gilbert and Lucy Benton Everhart were the great grandparents of Rhonda Tannihill Hoyt in Chart VIII. Altha Dean Bush is the great granddaughter of Jerry Lampkins in Chart IX. The Reverend Joseph Gross was the grandfather of Thelma Gross Booth in Chart X.

From the Saint Mark membership four Longview public schools³⁶ and one Longview baseball field have been named: J. L. Everhart Elementary School, Mary C. Womack High School, Janie Daniels Elementary School, and Maggie B. Hudson Junior High School; and the Lloyd H. Walker Baseball Field in Stamper Park.

³⁶White, Ibid.

PASTORS

R. A. Hagler	1873	R. E. Wiley	1816-1917
M. F. Jamison	1874	S. L. Garrette	1918-1920
R. A. Hagler	1875-1880	Tyus	1921-1923
O. T. Womack	1880-1881	A. W. Whitaker	1924-1925
R. S. Williams	1882-1884	W. T. Reager	1926
R. A. Hagler	1885-1887	I. E. Robinson	1927
M. S. Griffin	1887-1888	Merrett	1928
Spearman	1889	B. B. Hawkins	1929-1930
H. T. Lee	1890-1983	R. H. Blick	1931
Blackledge	1894	R. C. Mask	1931-1935
A. L. Dotson	1895	M. F. Jefferson	1935-1937
C. D. Boswell	1896	S. L. Garrette	1937-1939
A. D. Goodacre	1896-1897	F. D. Cook	1939-1941
Pinkston	1898	H. J. Jones	1941-1942
Hollis	1899-1900	I. E. Robinson	1942-1946
Nelson	1901	L. D. Jackson	1946-1950
Chas. Williams	1902	S. L. Garrette	1955-1956
W. R. Grundy	1903	R. T. Cunningham	1956-1960
Washington	1904	E. E. Dorn	1960-1962
D. A. Amos	1905-1906	D. V. Patton	1962-1975
P. J. Jones	1907	R. Campbell	1975-1980
Martin	1908-1910	A. J. Lawson	1980-1983
J. W. Lewis	1911-1912	J. H. Hill	1983-1985
S. L. Garrette	1912-1915	L. Z. Houston	1985-

PRESIDING ELDERS

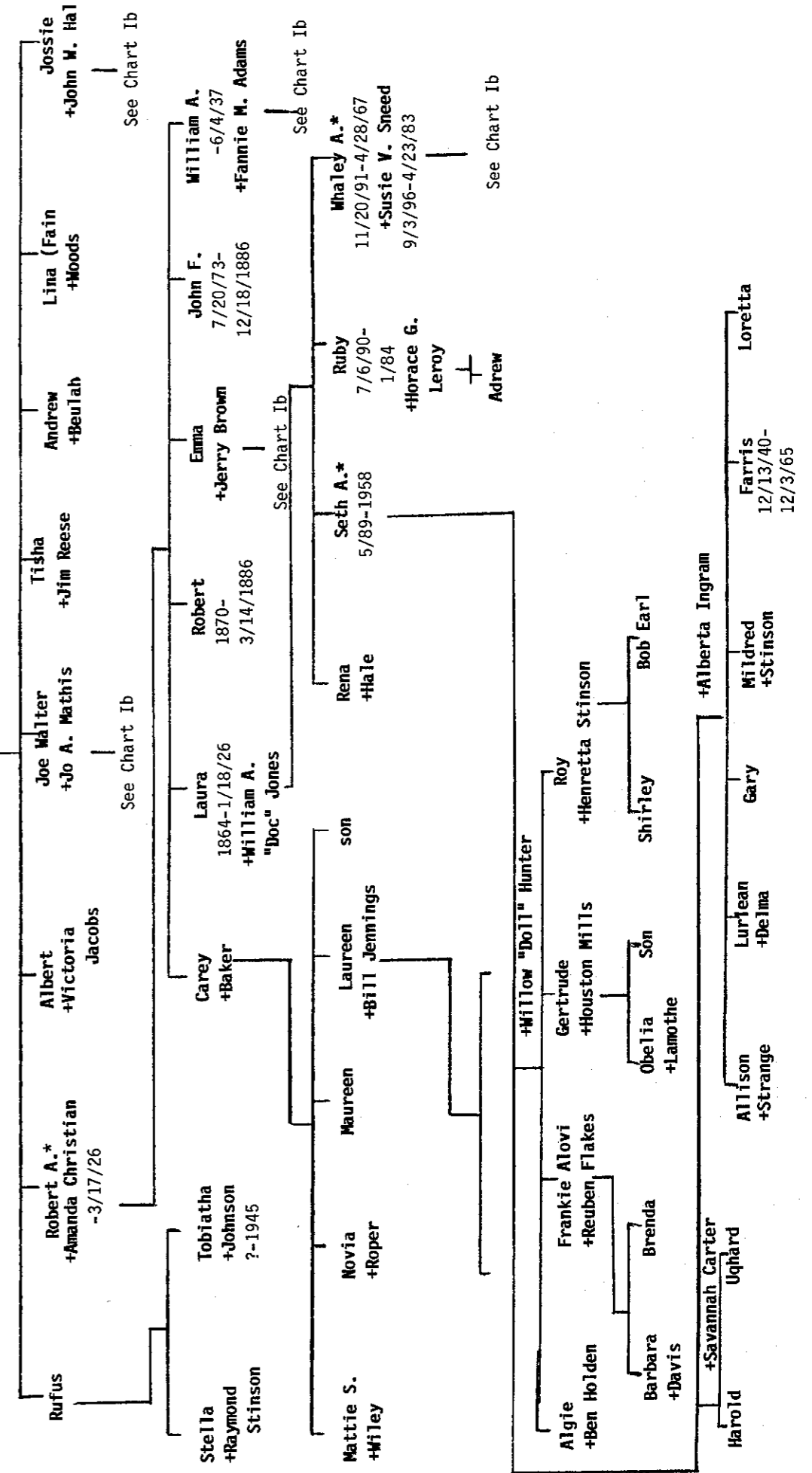
P. J. Jones	J. A. Jackson	F. D. Cook
O. T. Womack	W. F. Simon	F. W. Bendy
E. Wiley	L. G. Porter	W. A. Jones
C. F. Moore	S. L. Garrette	G. W. Humphrey
M. Lewis	W. T. Moore	W. L. Sneed
R. G. Johnson	I. E. Robinson	V. McCallister

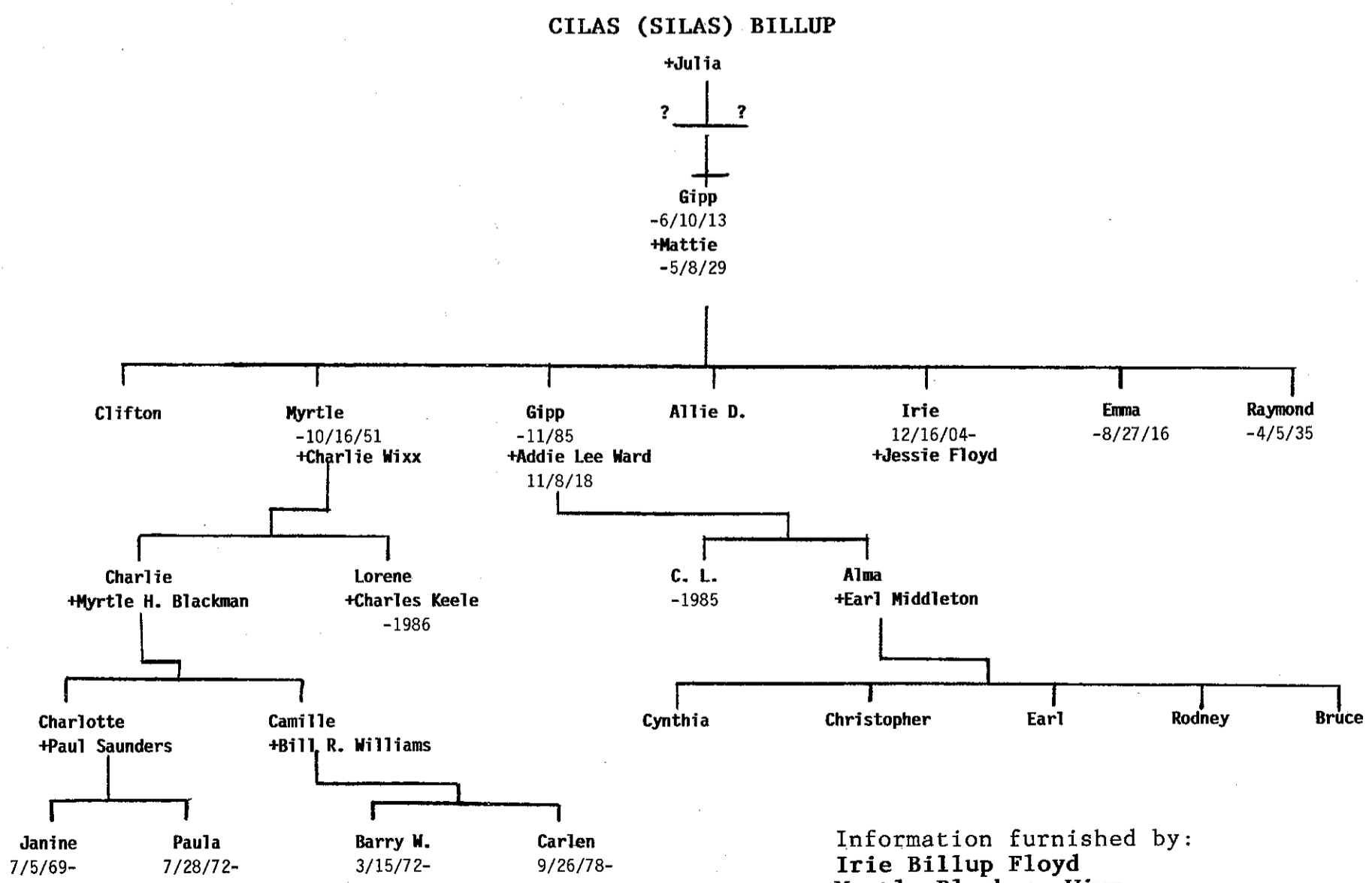
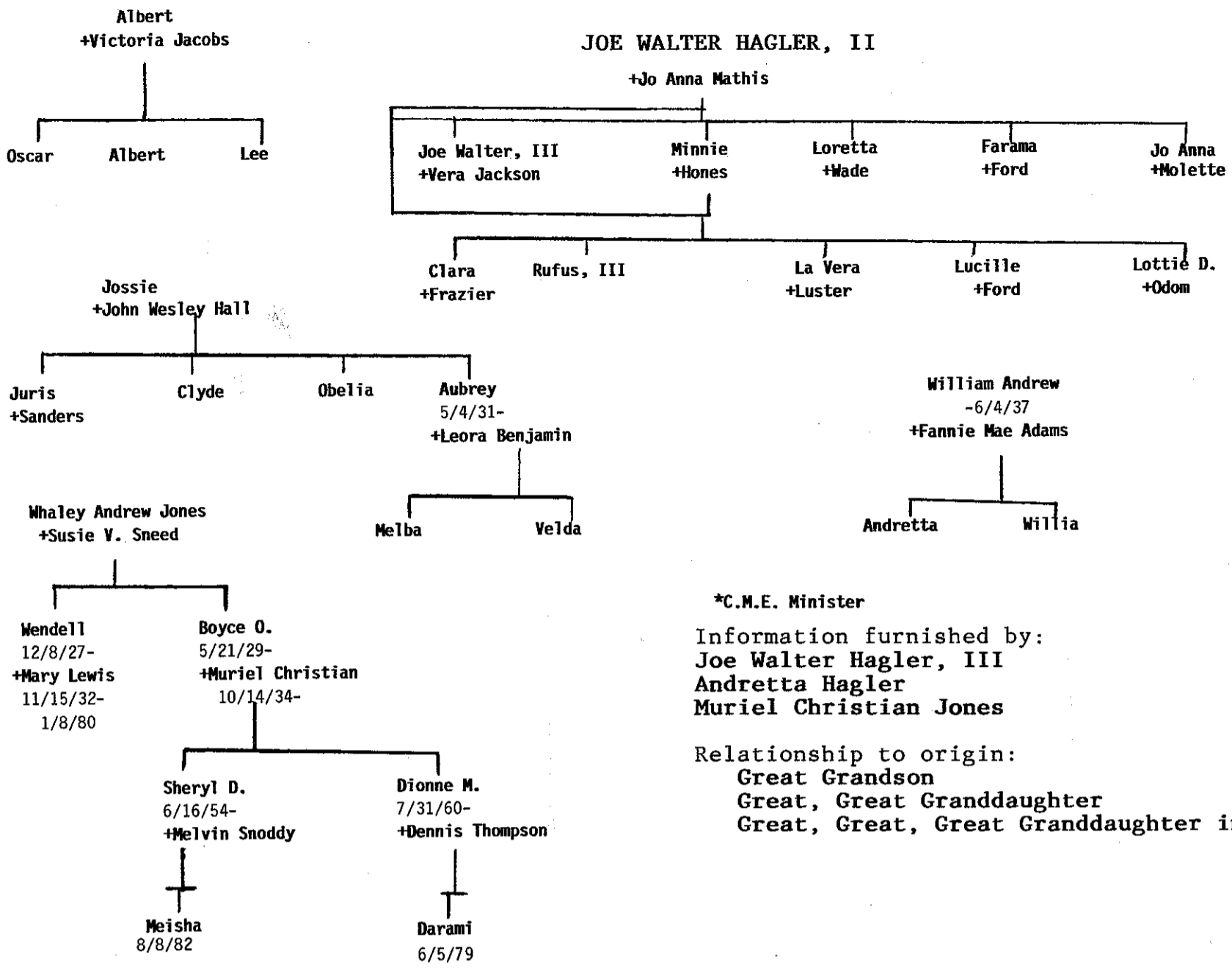
BISHOPS

J. A. Bebee	J. C. Martin	B. W. Doyle
Isaac Lane	J. W. McKinney	N. S. Curry
Elias Cottrell	R. A. Carter	C. D. Coleman
M. F. Jamison	H. P. Porter	

JOE WALTER HAGLER

Rufus Hagler
1928

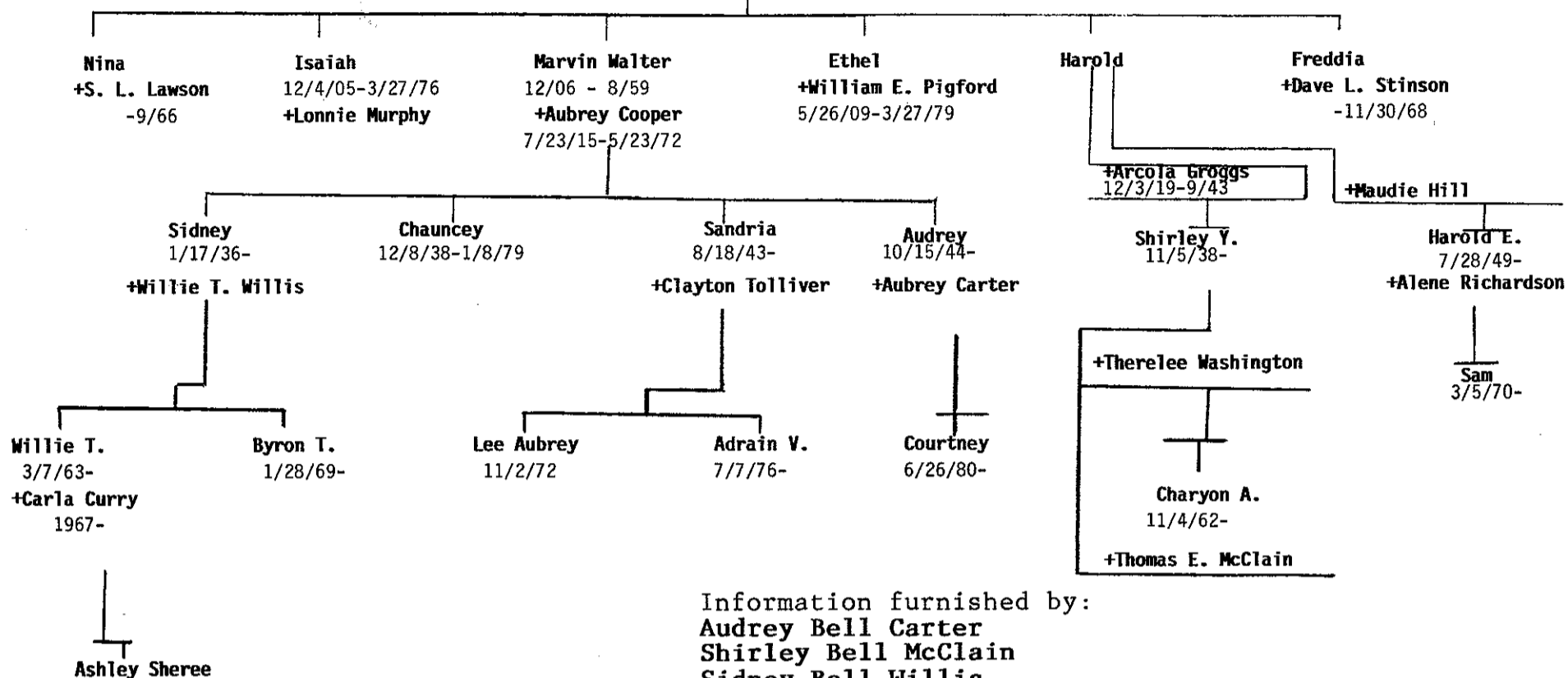




NOTE: Gipp Billup, Sr., had no knowledge of his parents; he was cared for by his grandmother.

WILLIAM MALONE

+Martha
-1900
Fannie
5/30/80 - 4/55
+Fred Bell **
8/79 - 8/30



Information furnished by:
Audrey Bell Carter
Shirley Bell McClain
Sidney Bell Willis

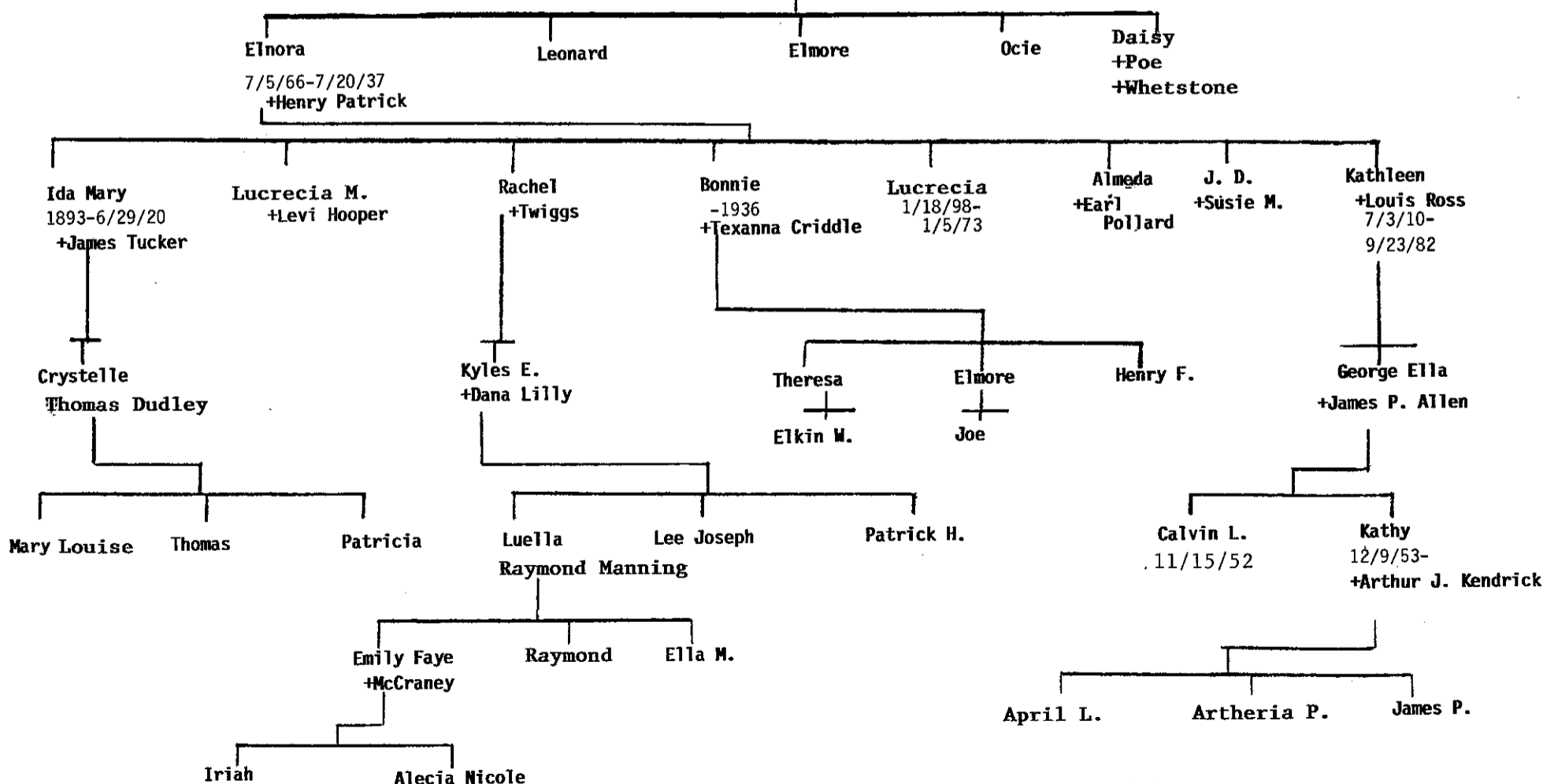
Relationship to origin:
Great Granddaughters

**First family member of St. Mark

Genealogical Chart III

CRECIA SMITH

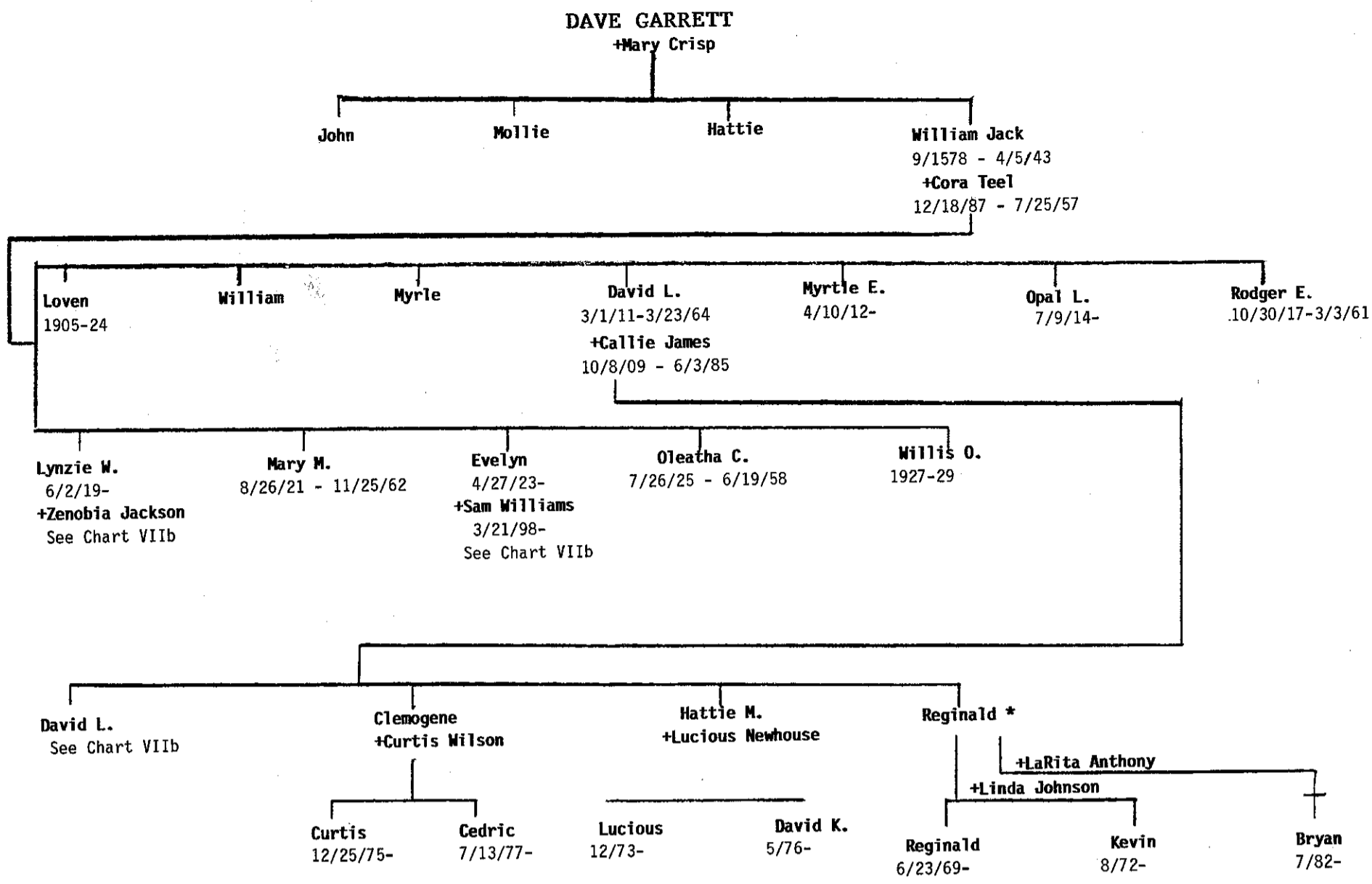
-1935



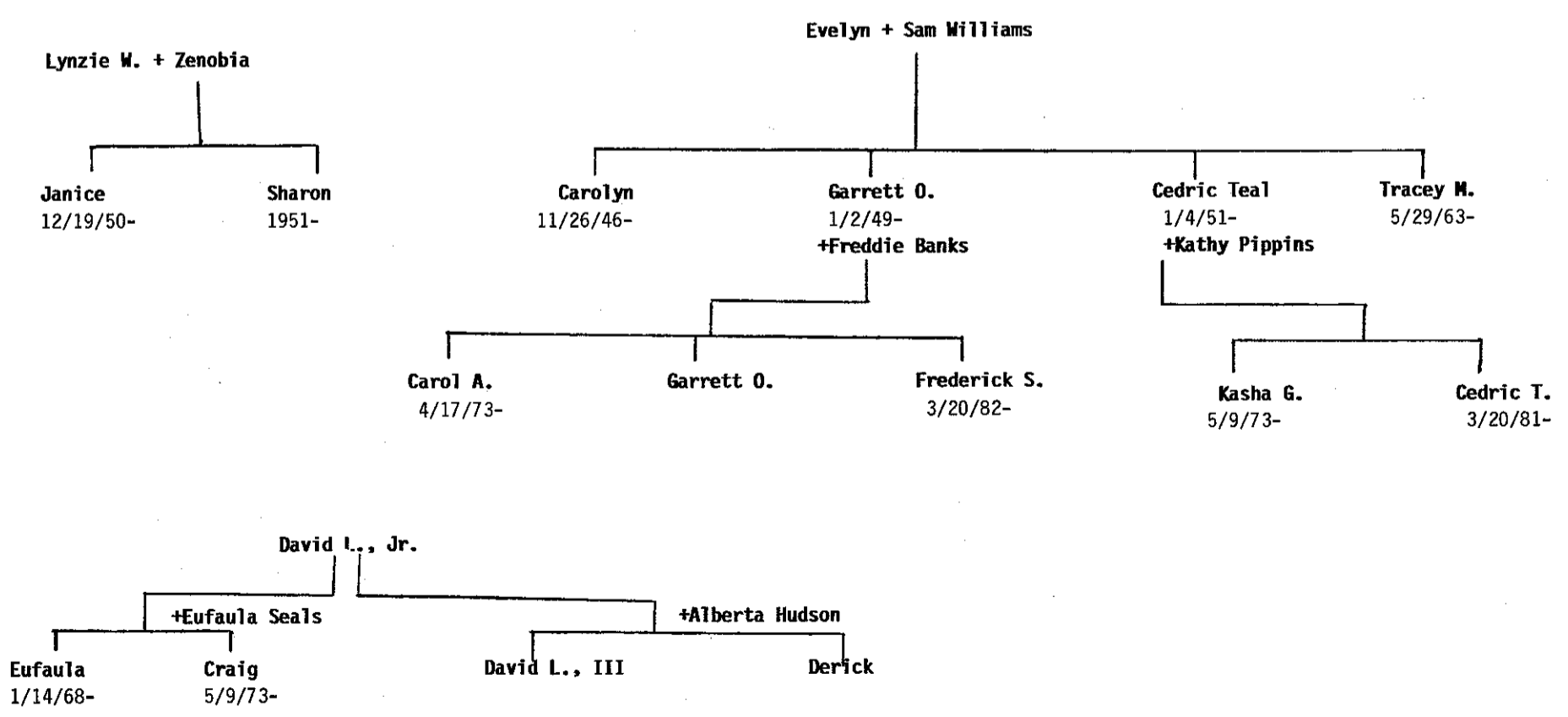
Information furnished by:
Kathleen Patrick Ross

Relationship to origin:
Granddaughter

Genealogical Chart IV



Genealogical Chart VIIa

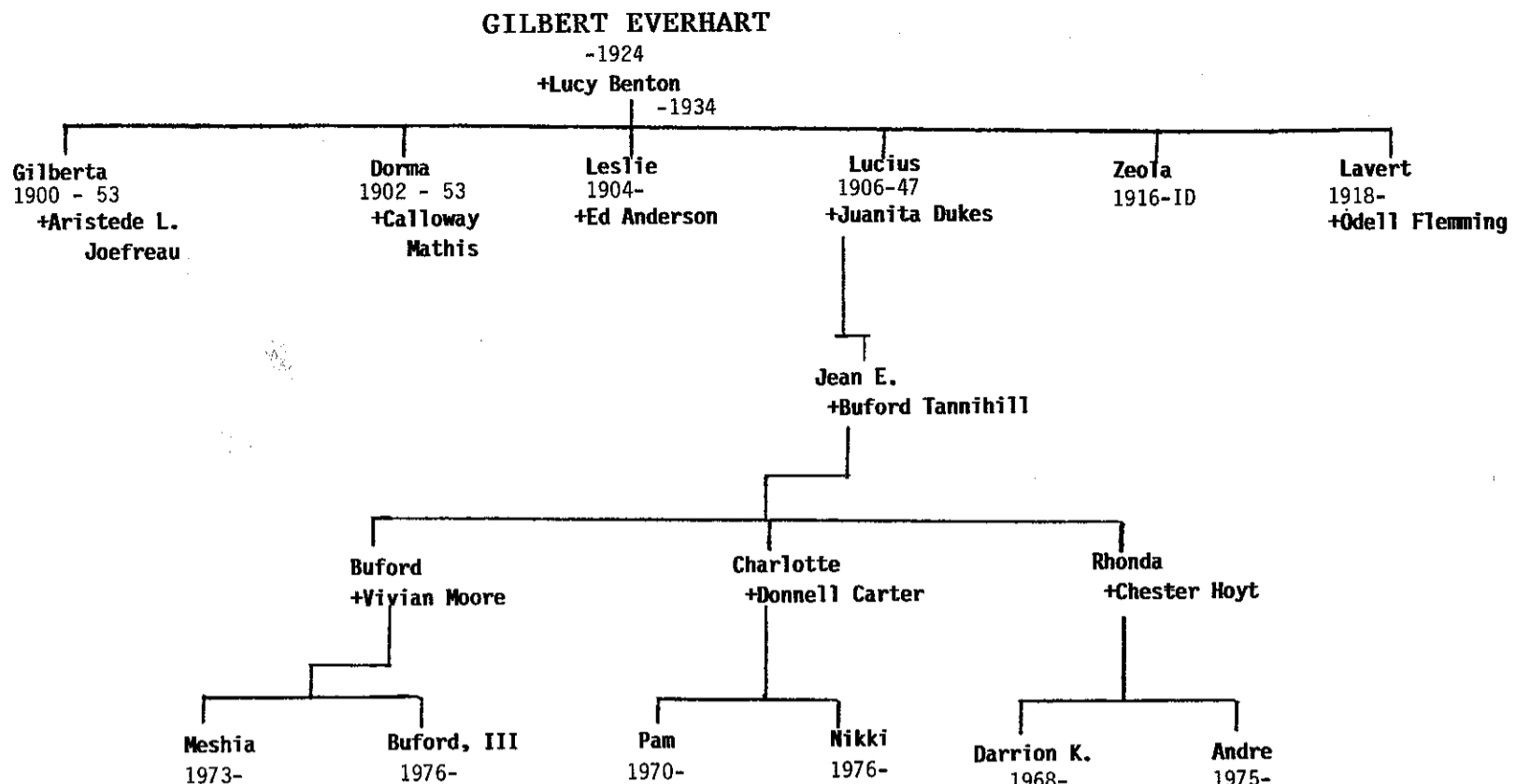


Genealogical Chart VIIb

* CME Minister

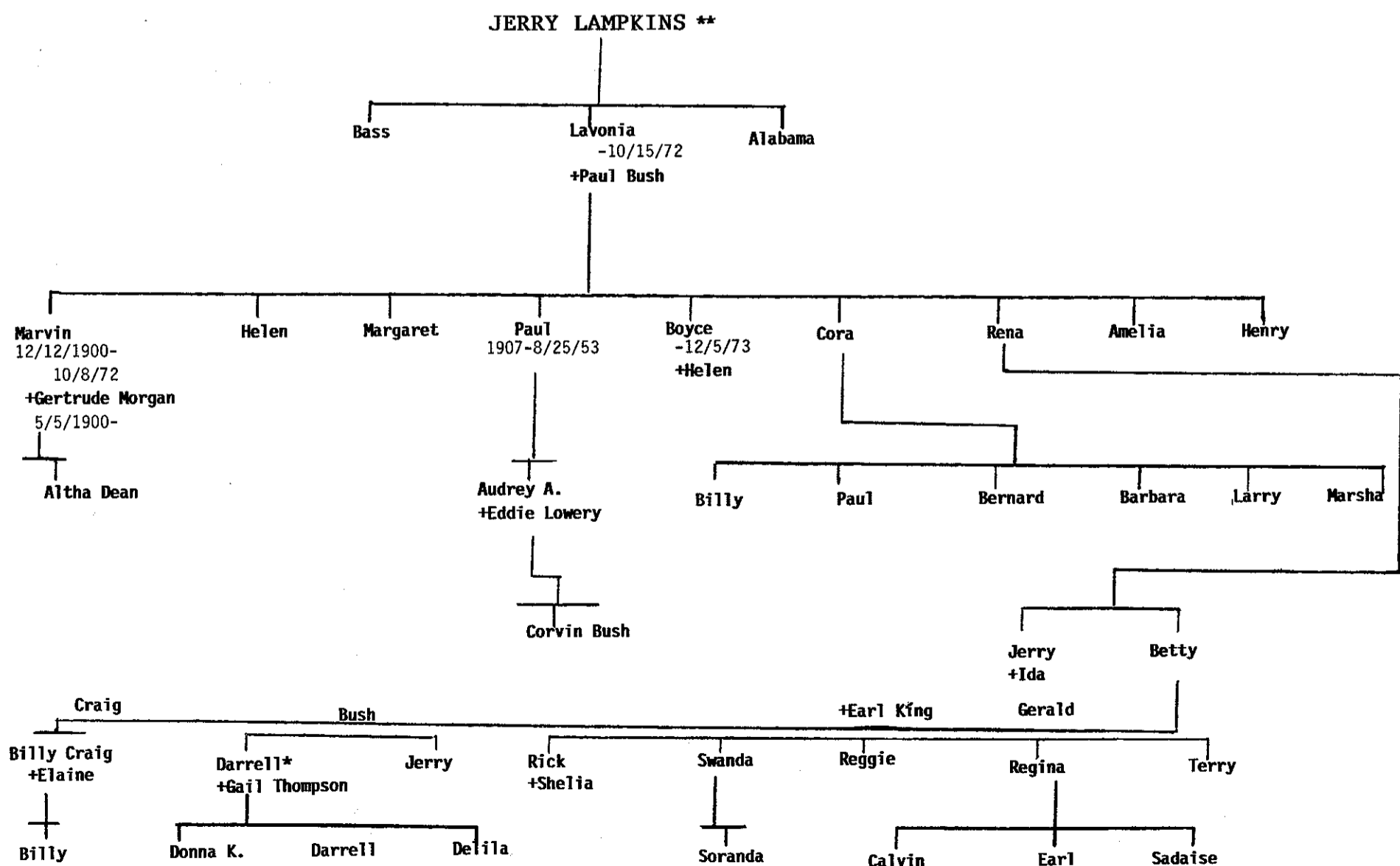
Information furnished by:
Evelyn Garrett Williams

Relationship to origin:
Granddaughter



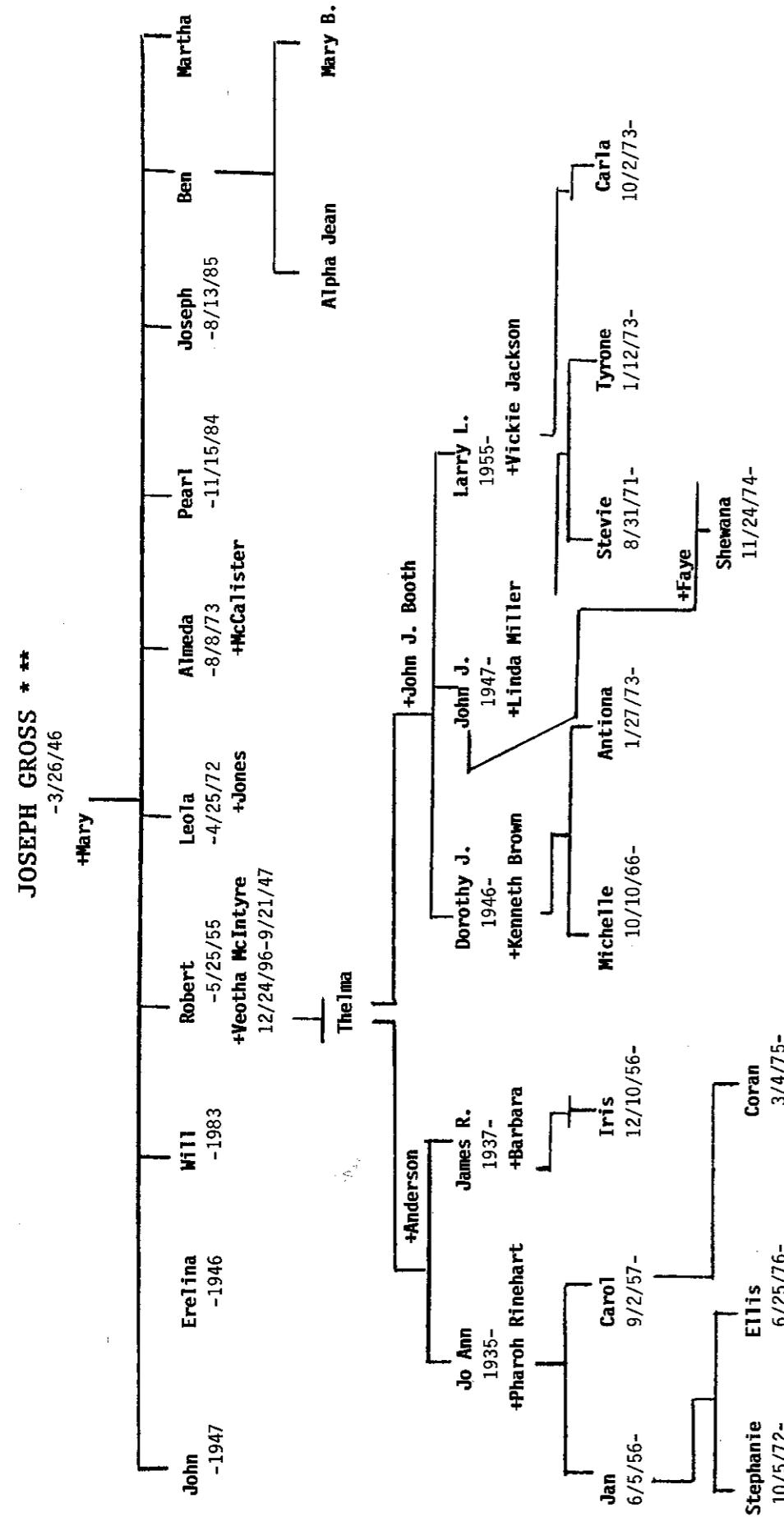
Information furnished by:
Odell Fleming Everhart
Jean Everhart Tannahill

Relationship to origin:
Daughter in-law
Granddaughter



*Baptist Minister **Member of Saint Mark

Information furnished by: **Altha Dean Bush**
Darrell Bush
Relationship to origin: **Great Grand & Great, Great Grandfather**



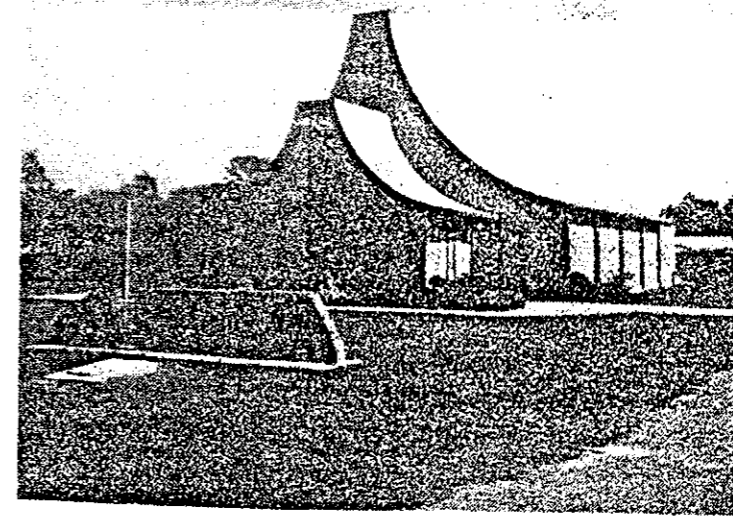
Information furnished by:
Thelma Gross Booth

Relationship to origin:
Granddaughter

*CME Minister
**First family member of St. Mark

Church calendar

107th Commemoration Service



ST. MARK CME CHURCH

The St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal Church will observe its 107th founding on March 25, 1979 during the morning worship hour.

The featured speaker will be Dr. Allen C. Hancock, President of Texas College.

The first Negro church in Longview, was founded by Rev. Robert A. "Bob" Hagler in 1872. The first location was a cluster of pine trees on the corner of what is now First and Padon Streets. The site was relocated to the present location, 1100 Sapphire Street, in 1972 - 100 years after its founding.

Descendents of the founding fathers still hold membership. These descendents are: Boyce O. Jones, great-grand son,



DR. ALLEN C. HANCOCK

Mrs. Sheryl Jones Snoddy and Mrs. Dionne Jones Thompson, great-great granddaughters of the founder, Rev. Hagler. Mrs. Altha D. Bush, great-granddaughter of Mr. Jerry Lampkins, first trustee. Mrs. Kathleen Ross, step granddaughter, Mrs. George E. Allen, step great granddaughter, Calvin L and Kathy Allen, step great-great-grandchildren of Rev. Wade Hamilton (first steward).

Mrs. Evelyn G. Williams, great-grand niece and Ms. Tracye Williams, great-great-grand niece of Mr. John Criss (first steward).

Four (4) schools in the Longview Independent School District have been named in honor of members of the church. The members and honors are: Mr. J. L. Everhart—J.L. Everhart Elementary School, 1000 S. 16th Street; the late Mrs. Mary C. Womack—formally Longview Colored High School—Gum at Boyd Street—now closed; the late Mrs. Janie Daniels—formally Janie

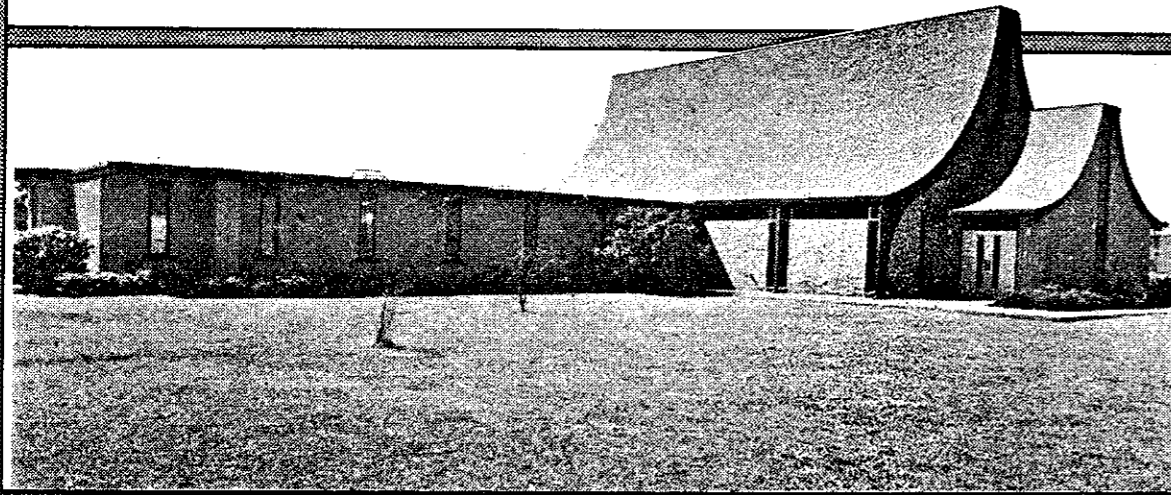
Daniel Elementary School, East Marshall Street, presently serving as county offices, the late Mrs. Maggie B. Hudson—formally Maggie B. Hudson Junior High School, now Hudson Pep School, 1609

The public is invited to join with the membership in this historical observance.

SAINT MARK Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Saint Mark CME Church (c. 1867-), organized as an affiliate of the Methodist Church South before the CME Church (1870-) and Gregg County were formed, was built and dedicated to God by men who were by state law illiterate. These men, Jerry Lampkins, Berry Allen, Jack Fields, Albert Brown, and Silas Billups, who grew into manhood in the late ante-bellum days, restricted this property for "use only" in perpetuity for "church and school."

The Sant Mark CME Church wishes to extend to you its heritage of religious faith and education, which will insure for you all of the necessary amenities of life.



SUNDAY SERVICES:

Sunday School — 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship — 10:45 A.M.
Evening Service — 6:30 P.M.

Rev. A. J. Lawson, Jr, Pastor; John Frazier, Steward; Mrs. Jessie Smith, Stewardess; Oscar Moore, Trustee; Mrs. Evelyn Williams, Missionary; Isaac E. Willis, Sunday School; Boyce O. Jones, Lay Leader; Mrs. Sidney Willis, Music; Willie A. Williams, Public Relations.

1100 SAPPHIRE STREET

PHONE: 753-3210

Vol. No. 20
The State of Texas, Know all men by these presents that I John R. Magrill of the aforesaid State and County, in consideration of the sum of fifty dollars in specie paid me by the colored people in and around Longview the receipt for which is hereby acknowledged have agreed bargained sold conveyed to them their heirs or assigns one acre of land in the aforesaid State and County near Longview commencing at the aforesaid J. W. corner and running South with said Magrill West Boundary line seventy yards to a stake thence east seventy yards to a small Pine (blazed) thence North seventy yards to John R. Magrill North Boundary line to a Pine thence west to the place of beginning containing in all one acre of land to have and to hold the aforesaid premises for the use only of Church and school the legal right and title to said land I warrant good against the claims of all persons which

I will defend said church to be known and used as given with the colored people signed sealed and delivered in presence of
John R. Magrill

Silas Billups
Alice Perry

The State of Texas, Before me W. W. Tamm a Justice of the Peace in and for Precinct No. 3 of Upshur County and a Justice of the Peace personally known John R. Magrill of the said County whose name appears as Grantor in the foregoing deed of conveyance, or writing bearing date the 25th day of July A.D. 1871, and acknowledged the same to be his act and deed, and declared that he signed and delivered the same for the purposes, uses and purposes mentioned therein but further expressed that he signed and delivered the same for the purposes, uses and purposes mentioned therein and affix my official seal this 25th day of July 1871 W. W. Tamm J. P. and Justice of the Peace

THE HISTORY OF SAINT MARK C.M.E. CHURCH
as told by CARRIE BOLDEN WHITE
to Evelyn Garrett Williams

I was born on March 24, 1880, at the corner of North Green Street and Marshall Highway in Longview, Gregg County, Texas. Saint Mark Church was one block south of our home; therefore, some of my first memories include my presence at Saint Mark C.M.E. Church.

Since the time I was about six years old, I can remember the two story building with its single walls and wood stoves which never seemed to get the church warm on cold days. There were cracks which the extra outside boards (weather strips) were never adjusted to cover, and it was kind of nice for little children to peek outside at the big boys and girls standing in the shade of the big trees. We were attracted to the stairway leading to the second floor where the men met sometimes, but our parents always told us that they kept a wild goat up there, and we were afraid to climb to the top where the older children said that the goat could be heart butting his head against the walls. On Sundays and other meeting days there were saddle horses, buggies, and wagons, often containing big boxes of food, hitched to trees and post all around the church.

In 1893 I became a member of Saint Mark, and by that time I had heard the "story" of the church so many times

from the old folks as they sat around the hearth with only the flickering light from the burning wood dancing on their stern but contented faces. I knew that our religious services were once held the year round under the brush arbor which still stood across the street and was still used on hot summer days. No one seemed to know when the brush arbor was first built, but it had been there a long time, and an independent C.M.E. Church began its religious services there on the corner of Padon and First Streets in 1867.

The people were proud of their church building which was completed in 1877. They had made great sacrifices with every contribution each person made. Even the odd pieces of lumber, rusty and used nails, old pieces of second-hand furniture, and used windows were brought to the church ground a piece at a time, and most of these items were needed at home.

The UBF Lodge was a vital part of the people at that time, and the people were very proud of the lodge. I never saw the goat, but everybody saw the lodge members helping and nursing the sick, burying the dead, and helping the living when they were in need.

I remember when the "box house" church, which everyone knew measured forty by sixty feet, was torn down to make way for our first frame building. There were very few dry eyes. It happened the same year that I joined Saint Mark, and I realized that those tears revealed that the box house

church was beautiful because it was a true work of love as well as a sacrifice which could never be repeated.

I was proud of the work I did to help with the building of the new church in 1893. There were meals to be cooked and served to the men whose appetites could never be satisfied, and there were mountains of dishes to wash. I made a physical contribution to the building of the church, and now the church owned me.

Our first parsonage was build in 1916, and it burned soon after. The second parsonage wasn't built until 1945.

Major repairs were done on the church in 1918, 1945, and in 1957.

When the bid for our present structure was accepted in 1971, my eyes became watery. I remembered the time seventy-eight years ago when I was thirteen years old. Although I prayed sincerely to be around for the dedication of the new church, my love for a building that had listened to my prayers for more than three fourths of a century could not be destroyed by decaying beams and crumbling mortar.

.....

Mrs. Carrie Bolden White knew most of the early church members. She heard the old folks talking about interesting incidents which occurred in their lives. She knew about the migratory movements of the freedmen. She knew about the plight of the Dave Garrett family which my Aunt Hattie

Garrett often told:

My paternal grandparents, Dave and Mary Crisp Garrett, owned a fertile farm in San Augustine, Texas. The economy in those days was so bad until it was hard to make a living. The white former property owner, in order to repossess the land (my aunt's belief) told that in Kansas there were smoked pigs with knives and forks stuck in their backs and syrup flowing in streams like water. So they along with their children and some friends formed a wagon train and started out for Kansas. They got as far as Texarkana where my grandfather became ill with pneumonia and died. My grandmother came back to Longview because she had a brother, John Criss, living there who could possibly help her with her ten children.

.....

(Edited by W. A. Williams)

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- Williams, Evelyn Garrett. History of Saint Mark CME Church as told by Carrie Bolden White, Longview, unpublished, 1972.

APPENDIX

1988 MEMBERSHIP ROLL
ST. MARK C.M.E. CHURCH

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Alexander, Debra | 25. Brown, Harry |
| 2. Allen, Calvin | 26. Brown, Vernita |
| 3. Allen, George Ella | 27. Brown, Welton |
| 4. Allen, James P. | 28. Bush, Altha D. |
| 5. Anderson, Ben | 29. Bush, Gertrude |
| 6. Anderson, Christopher | 30. Bush, Hosea |
| 7. Anderson, Linda K. | 31. Carrington, Ebbie |
| 8. Austin, Clyde | 32. Carter, Audrey |
| 9. Austin, Mary | 33. Carter, Courtney |
| 10. Austin, Michael | 34. Chambers, Babeth |
| 11. Barryer, Gertie M. | 35. Chambers, Gregory |
| 12. Bell, Brenda C. | 36. Champion, Rev. Albert |
| 13. Bell, Harold | 37. Champion, Carlton |
| 14. Bell, Mary | 38. Champion, Flora |
| 15. Blackman, Annie D. | 39. Champion, Joselyn |
| 16. Blair, Vivian L. | 40. Champion, Linda Gale |
| 17. Booth, John | 41. Champion, Savoy |
| 18. Booth, Thelma | 42. Champion, Waverly |
| 19. Bowie, Clarence | 43. Christian, Shanta |
| 20. Bouchum, Dorothy | 44. Clark, Kevin |
| 21. Bratton, Bill | 45. Clark, Linda |
| 22. Bratton, Jason | 46. Clay, Sarah |
| 23. Bratton, Lurenia | 47. Cooper, Alberta |
| 24. Bratton, Terry | 48. Cooper, Carol |

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 49. Cooper, Ruby | 76. Frazier, Janell |
| 50. Darden, Alonzo | 77. Frazier, John |
| 51. Darden, Beverlee | 78. Frazier, Rosa L. |
| 52. Darden, Calvin | 79. Grant, Harvell |
| 53. Darden, Paul | 80. Gregg, Devin Calmiric |
| 54. Darden, Pollye | 81. Griffin, Etheal C. |
| 55. Darden, Robert | 82. Griffin, Wilma |
| 56. Darden, Roderick | 83. Hamilton, Curtis V. |
| 57. Drayden, Lichie V. | 84. Hamilton, Irvin |
| 58. Dunn, Corey | 85. Harris, Abner |
| 59. Dunn, Daynean | 86. Harris, Alesia |
| 60. Dunn, Glenda C. | 87. Harris, Jamal |
| 61. Dunn, Jennifer | 88. Harris, Patricia |
| 62. Dunn, Kendra | 89. Harris, Reba |
| 63. Dunn, Rydale | 90. Head, Carla |
| 64. Dunn, Wynter Tashara | 91. Hickman, Thelma |
| 65. Eddington, Alfreda | 92. Hill, Alma |
| 66. Eddington, Debra | 93. Houston, Rev. Louis Z. |
| 67. Epperson, Glen | 94. Hoyt, Keith |
| 68. Everhart, J. L. | 95. Hoyt, Rhonda |
| 69. Everhart, Odell | 96. Ingram, Callie |
| 70. Everhart, Tameka | 97. Jackson, Charlene |
| 71. Fisher, Mary K. | 98. Jackson, Delma W. |
| 72. Fisher, Miles | 99. Jackson, Florence L. |
| 73. Flakes, Pauline | 100. Jackson, Jean A. |
| 74. Fields, Hattie | 101. Jackson, Ovaria |
| 75. Frazier, Janean | 102. Johnson, Beverley D. |

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 103. Johnson, Eva | 130. Pegues, Beverly |
| 104. Johnson, Jessie Winston | 131. Perry, Aaron |
| 105. Jones, Adriene D. | 132. Perry, Charyon W. |
| 106. Jones, Anthony | 133. Perry, Clyde |
| 107. Jones, Boyce O. | 134. Perry, Jennie L. |
| 108. Jones, Muriel C. | 135. Perry, Oscar |
| 109. Jones, Nettie | 136. Perry, Thelma |
| 110. Jones, Otis | 137. Pickron, Key'Ocea Na'Kay |
| 111. Kendricks, Kathy A. | 138. Pigford, Ethel B. |
| 112. Lamothe, Charlotte | 139. Preston, Janice |
| 113. Lawson, Lewis E. | 140. Preston, John |
| 114. Lawson, Sarah L. | 141. Preston, Jeanine B. |
| 115. Lloyd, Syrcie | 142. Preston, Jacqueline L. |
| 116. Long, Cecelia | 143. Ragsdale, Otis Sr. |
| 117. Long, Teresa | 144. Richardson, Shelia |
| 118. McAfee, Herman | 145. Rose, Gertrude |
| 119. McClain, Shirley B. | 146. Sanders, Charlotte W. |
| 120. McNeeley, R. E. | 147. Sanders, Lester |
| 121. McWilliams, Keith | 148. Sanders, Lindra |
| 122. McWilliams, L. J. | 149. Sapinter, Alnita O. |
| 123. McWilliams, Willie M. | 150. Scott, Audrey |
| 124. Maxey, Alyce F. | 151. Sentell, Edward Jr. |
| 125. Mitchell, Danny | 152. Sentell, Edward Sr. |
| 126. Mitchell, David | 153. Sentell, Serena |
| 127. Moore, Lucinda | 154. Shankle, Emmitt |
| 128. Nedd, Linda L. | 155. Shankle, Felecia |
| 129. Nelson, Eunestine | 156. Shankle, George Jr. |

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|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 157. Shankle, George Sr. | 184. Walker, Lloyd H. |
| 158. Shankle, Mary | 185. Ward, Juanita |
| 159. Smith, Gladys | 186. Whitaker, Ruth A. |
| 160. Smith, Jessie | 187. White, Vonda K. |
| 161. Smith, Kermit | 188. Wilborn, Edith |
| 162. Smith, Larry | 189. Wilborn, Paul |
| 163. Snoddy, Sheryl J. | 190. Williams, Cedric |
| 164. Stien, Charles | 191. Williams, Ester |
| 165. Stien, Judy | 192. Williams, Evelyn |
| 166. Stien, Wanyan Jr. | 193. Williams, Jarrell |
| 167. Stephens, Andrew | 194. Williams, Jell |
| 168. Stephens, Dawn | 195. Williams, Kasha |
| 169. Stephens, Linda | 196. Williams, Kathy |
| 170. Stephens, Shawn | 197. Williams, Leonard |
| 171. Stewart, Evelyn | 198. Williams, Susan C. |
| 172. Stewart, Leon | 199. Williams, Tracey |
| 173. Stinson, Freddia B. | 200. Williams, Trula A. |
| 174. Tanniehill, Jean | 201. Williams, Willie A. |
| 175. Thomas, Algeria | 202. Willis, Byron T. |
| 176. Thompson, Darami | 203. Willis, Isaac E. Jr. |
| 177. Thompson, Dionne J. | 204. Willis, Isaac G. |
| 178. Timberlake, Walter | 205. Willis, Lizzie |
| 179. Turner, Lillian | 206. Willis, Selwyn |
| 180. Turner, Jimmy | 207. Willis, Sidney B. |
| 181. Vaughn, Lisa | 208. Willis, W. T. Jr. |
| 182. Vaughn, Wanda | 209. Willis, W. T. Sr. |
| 183. Walker, Emma | 210. Wilson, Jack |

211. Wilson, Opal
 212. Woods, Brandon L.
 213. Woods, Chace M.
 214. Woods, Karen
 215. Woods, Willie

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TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 P.O. BOX 12276 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711 (512)463-6100

February 10, 1988

Dr. Norman Black
 417 Mobberly Avenue
 Longview, Texas 75602

RE: ST. MARK C.M.E. CHURCH
 18 x 28 subject marker with post (Job #37187)

Dear Dr. Black:

This letter is to notify you that the State Marker Committee has reviewed and approved the above-referenced topic for an Official Texas Historical Marker.

At this time, payment for the marker is due. A check, in the amount of \$405.00 (\$375.00 if paid for by a tax-exempt organization), should be made payable to the Texas Historical Commission and sent to the letterhead address at your earliest convenience.

Once payment is received, the application will be placed in line to have the marker inscription written. The inscription will not be written until after funds have been received. When the text is prepared, a copy will be sent to you and any parties listed below for review and approval.

The Texas Historical Commission wishes to congratulate you for your efforts to record and preserve Texas history.

Sincerely,

Frances Rickard

Frances Rickard, Director
 State Marker Program

cc: St. Mark C.M.E. Church
 W.A. Williams

P.S. An additional \$320 is due for the requested directional signs (4 signs @ \$80.00).

The State Agency for Historic Preservation



CURTIS TUNNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

P.O. BOX 12276

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711

(512) 463-6100

May 31, 1988

Dr. Norman Black
417 Mobberly Avenue
Longview, TX 75602

Re: ST. MARK C.M.E. CHURCH
18" x 28" Subject Marker with Post

Dear Dr. Black:

Enclosed is the proposed inscription for the above referenced marker. Please review and verify the information contained in the inscription. In particular, be sure to check all names and dates, and make certain we have used the correct marker location. Please contact other sponsors of this application to discuss the wording of the marker. If you approve the inscription, sign and return your own enclosed card.

If you have corrections or changes to suggest, please make a copy of the inscription and return it to us with the marked corrections. Please do not type a new version of the inscription. We will make changes to meet our style and spacing requirements. Documentation of any changes in this inscription, particularly of names and dates, is required for our permanent file.

Note that this is a working copy, including filing and foundry instructions. The right-hand margin is uneven on this copy, but will be justified on the finished marker.

The marker will not be ordered for casting until the county historical commission and other persons or groups listed below have approved the inscription. You may retain this inscription copy for your files.

Sincerely,

Cynthia J. Beeman

Cynthia J. Beeman, Historian
State Marker Program

CJB/crl

cc: St. Mark CME Church
W. A. Williams

Texas Historical Commission Staff (CJB), 5/24/88

18" x 28" Official Texas Historical Marker with post
Gregg County (Job #37187)

Location: 1100 Sapphire Street, Longview

SAINT MARK C.M.E.CHURCH*

FIRST KNOWN AS ST.MARK COLORED
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,THIS
CONGREGATION WAS ORGANIZED BY
FORMER SLAVES ABOUT 1867.WOR-
SHIP SERVICES WERE HELD IN A BRUSH
ARBOR BUILT AT THE PRESENT SITE
OF MAGRILL PARK.THE REV.ROBERT A.
HAGLER SERVED AS FIRST PASTOR,
AND UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP A TWO-
STORY SANCTUARY WAS BUILT IN
1876-77.IT WAS REPLACED BY A
NEW FRAME BUILDING IN 1893.IN
1954 THE CHURCH NAME WAS
CHANGED TO ST.MARK CHRISTIAN
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.THIS
SITE WAS ACQUIRED IN 1972.DESCEN-
DANTS OF FOUNDING MEMBERS
STILL ATTEND THE CHURCH.**

(1988)***

*1/2 inch lettering to contrast with text
**1/2 inch lettering
***1/4 inch lettering