

“Land of the Blest: ‘ The Rural Church Cemetery as Cultural Repository’ “

Chinn Chapel Cemetery

Copper Canyon, Texas

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"'Land of the Blest:' The Rural Church Cemetery as
Cultural Repository'"

"My Savior is now over there,
There my kindred and friends are at rest;
Then away from my sorrow and care,
Let me fly to the land of the blest.
Over there, over there,
My Savior is now over there." ¹

"The Home Over There"
D.W.C. Huntington

Annually on the third Sunday in May, families, friends, and other interested persons gather at old Chinn's Chapel Cemetery in Copper Canyon, Texas, for the traditional Texas "Decoration Day," a cultural celebration carried out in the spring at private, perpetual care family, church, and community cemeteries all over Texas. Typically an informal or legally constituted cemetery association adopts rules, hires a caretaker, and sets a date for members to visit, pay dues, inspect the site, conduct business, and place flowers or other decorations upon the graves. It serves as a time to honor one's ancestors and history, to renew friendships and family ties, and to reconnect one's relation with home and the land. It is a time to reflect upon life and death and to sense a heightened understanding of what it means to be a Texan. After working to clear and clean the cemetery, if necessary, or to improve particular grave sites, participants usually gather for a short sermon, a hymn or two, and dinner on the grounds. Mrs. Henry Calvert (Ethel Bradley Calvert) has lived all her life in the Chinn's Chapel Community. "It is no different now as then," she related in an oral history concerning Decoration Day at Chinn's Chapel. "People come hundreds of miles. They eat together as a family. They talk about family, jobs, and share memories. They go up to the cemetery and visit the graves of loved ones

and ancestors, evoking them in living memory by word of mouth." ²

At Chinn's Chapel, Decoration Day is held within the fence-enclosed ten-acre site on a hilltop under shady old-growth oaks and rotund cedars overlooking ponds and pastureland in the spring-fed valley below. The original Chinn's Chapel Methodist Church, a log cabin built in 1858 and believed to be the oldest existing Protestant church in Denton County, still stands within the confines of the cemetery. ³ A large limestone obelisk set upon a square base marks the graves of the founding Chinn family members, one each buried north, south, east, and west, their names and dates engraved upon each face of the upright stone pillar. To the west and lying parallel to the body of Elisha Chinn is the body of one of his slaves, the only person of his race buried in the cemetery. ⁴ The family of Mary and Elisha Chinn had travelled west from Alabama and purchased this beautiful site in 1853. ⁵ The Chinn family Bible, which may have arrived in their covered wagon, is now preserved at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. ⁶

The Chinns and other important settling families were attracted to sites near three freshwater springs with hardwood timber, plentiful game, and fertile land. ⁷ The fifth settlement of pioneers who had received land grants from the Republic of Texas to Peter's Colony already had been established in the area in 1845, the year Texas became the twenty-eighth state of the Union. ⁸ The Chinn's site was part of the first large settlement on the prairies, which was essentially a farming community. ⁹ They settled near the main thoroughfare, a road cut into the dirt by wagon wheels, horses' hooves, and foot travel. Streams from Loving, Murphy, and Lockhart Springs crossed the dirt road and ran into Hickory Creek.

Lockhart Spring served as a gathering place for the women whose job it was to wash clothes there and to haul fresh water home for household use. Large wooden barrels were used as no wells had yet been dug.¹⁰ While families enjoyed a new land of bounty and beauty, they also experienced the hardships of primitive living conditions, the sudden punishing exigencies of North Texas weather, the ever present mindfulness of nearby Native American enemies, and dangers from plentiful wild animals. Mustangs, deer, turkey, antelope, bear, panther, and buffalo filled the area.¹¹

Today the Western frontier is remembered as a period of high adventure, romance, and stirring events, such as the Great Cattle Drives, the Defense of the Alamo, and the Coming of the Railroad. These dramatic episodes and famous heroes of history were, however, but a small part of the daily life of the frontier. According to their diaries and journals, the majority of the pioneers felt their lives to be neither adventurous nor romantic.¹² They considered themselves to be everyday people involved in the tasks at hand, meeting the triptych of basic human need their families required: food, clothing, and shelter. It was in this spirit that four of the women of the area, including Mary Chinn, became friends as they met regularly at Lockhart Spring to wash clothes and draw water. The four friends shared a vision of a Christian community where women are free to create ways of relating, teaching, speaking, and serving, a Christian community in which all members would benefit from opportunities to worship together and help one another. Desiring a church, these women convinced their husbands and other families to bring one hand-hewn post oak log each time they came to the spring. Mary and Elisha Chinn

donated ten acres atop the hill 300 yards north of Lockhart Spring. Finally enough logs were gathered, and the women set a day for the church raising.¹³ It was a bold undertaking as houses of worship were then almost non-existent and religious services rare, these being held in cabins or out-of-doors, weather permitting, whenever a travelling preacher passed through. The formation of Protestant churches had been forbidden by law in favor of Catholicism when Texas was a province of Mexico. Stephen F. Austin, founder of the 1821 colony and recognized leader of the colonists in Texas, had specifically discouraged the public practice of Methodism. Quiet gatherings in homes were acceptable, but "excited methodist preachers" (sic) were troublemakers. "It will not do," he wrote, "to have the Methodist excitement raised in this country."¹⁴ Yet by 1833-34, there was evidence of a strong Methodist presence in Austin's colony.¹⁵ Those with Methodist connections were prominent in the battle for Texas independence, including one of the four "Heroes of the Alamo," former South Carolinian William Barrett Travis.¹⁵ During the years of the Republic of Texas, 1836-1846, a trio of Methodist heroes, missionaries who labored in the real sense of the word, established the Texas Mission Field: Martin Ruter, Robert Alexander, and Littleton Fowler.¹⁶ The social power of the Methodist Church and its ministry grew in the settled coastal areas of the state, with Methodists leading in moral and educational reform movements. More than half of all church members in the Republic of Texas were Methodists.¹⁷ After statehood in December of 1845, the Methodist circuit riding corps numbered sixty, and there were seventy-two local preachers.¹⁸ But even by the mid 1850's when the Chinnns chose

North Texas, they were still far from the settled areas of the state and isolated from the protections of society and the benefits of trained religious leadership.

W.B. Brown, who had arrived in North Texas in 1854, recalled a running Indian fight at the grove near the Chinn home.¹⁹ Another recollection was the building of a church about two miles northwest of the present town of Lewisville. "The erection of the church represented cooperative work on the part of the settlers, the labor and materials being furnished by various individuals. Before this church was built, religious services had been held in private homes and under the shade of trees, and at such times as journeying preachers happened to come to the community."²⁰ The settlers came together for an exciting festive occasion and raised the hand-hewn, dove-tail log chapel in one day. It was a dirt floor cabin with surprisingly large interior space, twenty-feet by twenty-feet square. Two doors, front and back, measured five feet in height. Cracks between the logs were filled with clay. An eight foot fireplace was built in the east end, and backless split log benches were included.²¹ The women who provided the necessary leadership were Mrs. Elisha Chinn (Mary Stowe Chinn, (1808-1871); Elizabeth Pinkley (1799-1861); Mrs. Samuel B. Wakefield (Jane Wakefield, 1826-1871); and Mrs. Abraham Loving (Susannah Pipkin Loving, 1815-1884.)²² The cabin was not named "Chinn's Chapel" in the beginning, nor was it a Methodist congregation. People of all denominations worshipped there and called it "Antioch" after the Biblical church in Syria, the instrument by which early Christianity became a world religion.²³ The log cabin served both as a house of worship whenever a preacher arrived and as a temporary residence for newcomers building their own cabins. They were required to set

their possessions out the back door for meetings and move back in afterward.²⁴ As deaths occurred among the early settlers, services were held in the cabin and graves were placed nearby. Mrs. Chinn, Miss Pinkley, and Mrs. Wakefield are buried there. After the area was fairly settled, the cabin was used as the community's schoolhouse for many years.²⁵

When the congregation at Antioch decided to hold regular services and adopt organizational plans, they sought membership in the North Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Admitted in 1872, they changed the name of the log cabin from "Antioch" to "Chinn's Chapel," since the efforts of Mary Chinn were recognized as the chief impetus for the existence of the building, and she and her husband were recognized for the gift of the land. A daughter-in-law, Mrs. Jess Chinn, was recognized for the organization of the congregation as Methodists.²⁶ There had been Methodist preaching in the area as early as 1840 or 1841 in a camp of rangers by "the Indian fighting Methodist preacher" John Bunyan Denton, for whom Denton County, in which we find Chinn's Chapel, is named.²⁷ Denton had come to Texas as a Methodist preacher in 1837, appointed by the Arkansas Conference to serve Sulfur Fork.²⁸ William E. Bates was perhaps most responsible, however, for introducing Methodism into Denton County. He organized many congregations and tended thirty-one appointments on his circuit, which seems to have passed through the Chinn's Chapel area. According to his son, historian Ed F. Bates, his father had several narrow escapes from Indians as he travelled twenty-seven days each month making the rounds of his circuit.²⁹

During the third quarter of the nineteenth-century, the area of settlement surrounding the church and burial ground on the hill became a social, educational, and

religious community called "Chinn's Chapel." The most popular site in the community was probably the Methodist campground in the valley below the church and cemetery. Camp meetings were significant events in the social and spiritual lives of Texans. During August, the traditional social season between spring planting and fall harvest, the whole populace almost in its entirety turned out for many miles around.³⁰ Camp meetings served as the chief evangelical tool of Methodism from about 1850 to 1900.³¹

By the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, a rapid increase in population, as well as change in building and technology, for example the lighting and heating of interior space, led the Chinn's Chapel congregation to plan for a more adequate house of worship. In 1877, the church's trustees purchased the four-acre campground site in the valley, and there they erected a new building much different from the old log cabin on the hill. Those trustees who undertook the building of the new chapel were: Martin Guthrie, A. McLean, Ezekiel H. Rowell, J.R. Lester, and L.N. Carter.³² Now the Methodists were seated on backless benches surrounding a warming pot-bellied stove in winter and were cooled in summer by cross ventilation from eight glassed windows which could be lifted and closed. The name "Chinn's Chapel Methodist Church" was transferred from the old log cabin to the new structure, and people began referring to the log cabin as "the old chapel" or simply "the log cabin."

The chapel continued to serve as the community's schoolhouse for many years.³³ Though a new school was built beside the new church in the valley in 1884, the log cabin was still in use for some grades in 1903 when Mary Fanny Card (1885-1957) taught there. A number of her relatives and those of the man she married lie

buried in the cemetery which, by then, surrounded the log cabin. Fanny Card Coffey is among the most interesting of the many women associated with Chinn's Chapel. She has been called "the Petticoat Pioneer."³⁴ Born in Denton County, the second youngest of ten children, she was orphaned before age twelve. An aunt and uncle took her in and educated her at Kidd-Key College, a Methodist school in Sherman. She married famed lawman G. Frank Coffey, a Fort Worth police chief who was later killed in a gunfight in the street. At the death of her husband, Mrs. Coffey, who had never worked outside the home except as a rural school teacher at Chinn's Chapel, was faced with the care and support of her four children and her seventy-two-year-old father-in-law. In 1918 she announced her candidacy for district clerk, the first woman to file for Tarrant County public office. She was twice elected. An active Democrat, she participated at the state and national levels. After an altercation with the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's in which she refused to fire a Catholic employee, she moved to San Antonio where she sold insurance and emceed a successful radio show as Public Relations Director for Central Light and Power Company. Returning to Fort Worth during the 1930's Depression Era, she became a successful business woman finding persons who owed money. She died at age seventy-two in 1957.³⁵ From rural log cabin school teacher to urban politician and business woman, she serves as an example of the ingenuity, strength, and competence of Texas's "Petticoat Pioneers."

Though the log cabin at Chinn's Chapel was made more comfortable with a wooden floor, siding to cover the cracks and protect from the biting winter wind, and the removal of the fireplace and addition of a warming pot-bellied stove, eventually educational activities

shifted completely to "Chinn's Chapel School," the 1884 two-story structure established as Public School Number 62. The new school beside the church in the valley was more comfortable, more accessible, and closer to the water source. The upper floor of the building served as a Woodmen of the World Lodge where a men's social group sponsored by an insurance company of that name met on a regular basis.³⁶ Mrs. Henry Calvert (Ethel Bradley Calvert, born 1911) attended "Chapel School" and recalled being told there were ghosts upstairs, a tactic doubtless designed to discourage children from straying to the forbidden second floor. Lodge meetings, picnics, softball games, weekday school, Methodist services, and outdoor summer revivals now took place in the valley below the cemetery. Chapel School grew to a peak enrollment of about 128 in 1910. It was well-known throughout southern Denton County.³⁷ The log cabin in the cemetery began to be used for storage and occasionally for shelter from sudden rainstorms by workers and visitors to the cemetery. Graves now completely surrounded the cabin and covered the acres before it.

Travel to the cemetery had never been easy, especially for those living outside the community. Though the wagon trail through the valley had long connected Denton, Texas, the county seat, with Lewisville in the south, and thence to Dallas, a westerly road leading to the nearby Waketon Community was greatly needed. Residents of the Chinn's Chapel Community wished to use Waketon General Store and Wakefield's Gin. In 1885 Denton County Commissioners approved the J.B. Shelton Survey and authorized a road connecting Denton and Waketon, which included the old wagon trail through the Chinn's Chapel Community. This road connected Ware and Younts Gins, south of Denton, and allowed Waketon and

Chinn's Chapel residents access to a central site for the Democratic primary and general elections at the Waketon General Store. Local elections were held at Chinn's Chapel Methodist Church, its grounds bordered by the new road named "Chinn Chapel Road." (The apostrophe 's' was not included in the road's name, probably to accommodate easier pronunciation.) Chinn Chapel Road also made travel to the Chinn's Chapel Cemetery less difficult for funeral visitors from other communities. It remained a dirt road until 1961.³⁸

Burials and graveside services are still taking place at Chinn's Chapel Cemetery in 1995, though the cemetery is almost filled. Bluebonnets, the state flower, tipped with white, and orange-red Indian Paintbrushes have spread prolifically and blanket the cemetery in April and May with those quintessentially Texas colors, red, white, and blue, the colors of the Texas flag. Upon entering the cemetery, one is immediately drawn to inspect the old log cabin, to stand inside and imagine the voices of worshippers from the 1850's, the laughter of school children of the 1860's, and the businesslike tones of those organizing as Methodists in the 1870's. Walking through the cemetery, one notices the differences in the size, cut, and design of the stones. Among the oldest are those of thin limestone, which display the inverted "U" shape that can only be

referenced using the old designation "tombstone," rather than "monument" or "marker." The oldest still legible of this type is that of infant Mary Sublett (born and died February 18, 1858). Nearby is a tombstone for an unnamed infant, inscribed "Infant of I.P. Sublett and S.E. Sublett, January 3, 1860." Three more tombstones for unnamed infant Subletts are present, but the inscriptions list different parents of a later generation. Infant Mary Sublett, whose stone is the oldest in the cemetery may have been the daughter of I.P. and S.E. Sublett. The next oldest tombstones of this quarter century are the single upright stones of Johnnie Calvin and Sam Crawford, both of whom died in 1866, and the double upright stones for husband and wife John P. Chinn, who died in 1874, and Willie E. Chinn who died in 1866. The earliest graves, however, were often simply marked with rocks, often fairly round, one larger at the head and one smaller at the foot of the grave. Some of these rocks were removed by a cemetery caretaker in the 1930's or 1940's so that grass could be more easily mowed. The Chinn's Chapel Cemetery Association has set aside the entire area as an unknown gravesite. There are also many tombstones of this period carved from native sandstone. Their inscriptions are no longer legible. The Association plans to replace these with flat granite markers

inscribed "Unknown," though the markers will be saved.

Visitors to the cemetery have long been intrigued by a semicircle of remaining rock headstones, apparently a special resting place for twenty infants and young children. The reason for their burial together in this arrangement instead of with their families as other children remains unknown. Another of the oldest type is the heavy flat head and foot stone. Though three of these are marked "1800," those of Ted Bush, Willie Ervin, and Kate Ervin, it is unknown whether these were birth or death dates, or a general date for the century in which they lived. All other flat stones of this type were placed for deaths in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, with the exception of James M. Wilkins who died in 1862.

Stones of the last quarter of the nineteenth-century and first quarter of the twentieth-century seem more aptly described as "monuments," though most in Chinn's Chapel Cemetery are modest as compared to the extremely large and sculpted monuments found in wealthier places. Yet these are monuments still, reflective of "the Gilded Age in American architectural style. Many of these express their individual importance with increased height such as those of George R. McLeod (1843-1916) and M.A. McLeod (1843-1901), which are seven to eight-feet tall. These are designed with columns, pediments, urns,

round-topped finials, and the like. Others are made distinctive in their use of sculptural embellishment, such as the monument to the memory of Edith Olaine Orr (1911-1913), daughter of C.W. and C.M. Orr, which is adorned with a spray of lilies and forget-me-nots. Monuments of this period are inscribed with loving phrases, verses of scripture, honorific titles, symbolic imagery, and special decor. In addition to a monument of substantial size, the grave of Dr. C.S. Wainwright (1835-1888) is covered with cement in which mussel shells, probably from nearby Hickory Creek, have been embedded. Shell decoration of graves is a traditional cemetery practice in the Southern United States, which originated in Africa and was brought to the region by African slaves.³⁹ Other family plots in Chinn's Chapel Cemetery display the swept-earth custom, some then outlined with shells placed in the earth. The Dillard family plot is of this type. Later generations have decided not to continue removing, cleaning, and replacing the shells in the dirt since they provide a favorite home for that ubiquitous Texas creature, the scorpion.⁴⁰

The advent of photographic technology allowed Victorian mourners to keep in public view images of departed loved ones in life and in death. Such photographs should not be viewed as sensational or morbid. They were not viewed as such by nineteenth-century mourners who knew how to respond to them. While oil portraiture had long been reserved for the rich, photography was soon made available to everyone. Travelling ^{daguerreotype} photographers visited settlement outposts and offered their services to the living and families of the just-deceased as well. Civil war photographs of living soldiers, especially leaders, and scenes of corpses on the ^{artists and soon}

battlefield were published in newspapers and familiarized Americans with the new art of photography. Post-mortem visual images of important loved ones became treasured memorials of ended lives. They usually depicted the corpse as sleeping, and this was often the only photograph of the person ever made. Survivors were proud of these images and hung them in their homes, took them for viewing when travelling to visit friends and relatives, wore them as locket, and carried them as pocket mirrors. Photography was chosen as a funerary device, helpful in the grieving process and eventual acceptance. The soul was thought to leave its mark upon the face as it departed the body, and so it was expected of viewers to comment on the peacefulness, intelligence, and perhaps humor or joy seen in the facial expression. In 1848, a photographic studio advertised, "We take great pains to have Miniatures of Deceased Persons agreeable and satisfactory, and they are often so natural."⁴¹ As photography became more available in the second half of the nineteenth-century, many Americans had their portrait pictures taken by travelling photographers or visited a photographic studio, displaying the products in their homes. Naturally more pleasant reminders of loved ones who had passed away, these photographs of living persons were now chosen as funerary devices and embedded in monuments marking their graves. In this tradition we find three photographs in Chinn's Chapel Cemetery: Robert Wayne Meek (1955-1972), a handsome teenager with a slightly mischievous, sweet expression; Etha O. Robertson (1891-1929), a pleasant-looking, dapper gentleman dressed in a light colored suit with a bow tie and wearing an elegant hat; and Burl Calvert (1871-1956), simply clad, perhaps as a farmer, with a twinkle in his eye. A photograph of his wife, Julia Lester Calvert

(1871-1956), has been removed from her monument.

Hundreds of pioneers lie buried in Chinn's Chapel Cemetery. Soldiers of the Civil War, such as Cavalry Officer William L. Hawk (b. 1843), physician Sargeant Ezekiel H. Rowell (1801-1894), and W. Marion McCreless (1847-1934), lie buried not far from soldiers of another century, World War I veterans Frank Bradford (1895-1974) and George W. Coulter (1894-1959) and World War II veterans James Harper (1912-1976) and Lt. Samuel Otis Painter (1921-1944), who gave his life for his country in battle.

Those who created Chinn's Chapel as a Methodist community and supported Methodism during their lives lie buried in Chinn's Chapel Cemetery, including three of the four women who built the first house of worship. Mary Stowe Chinn (1808-1871), Elizabeth Pinkley (1799-1867), and Jane Wakefield (1826-1861). Elisha Chinn who, along with his wife, gave the land and their name to the church, school, and community, lies buried in Chinn's Chapel Cemetery. Three of the trustees who built Chinn's Chapel Methodist Church in the valley are buried there, Martin Guthrie (1831-1912), J.R. Lester (1822-1890), and Ezekiel H. Rowell (1801-1894). Rev. George W. Jackson (1827-1906) and his wife Sarah Ann (1837-1925), a Methodist preacher and his wife who were a popular travelling revival team, are buried there, along with their four sons who were known as "The Jackson Quartet." Johnnie R. Russell (1902-1987) and wife Jewel Dillard Russell (1907-1982), Chinn's Chapel's well-loved Revival Era song leader and piano player, lie buried near John C. Dillard (1891-1962), known as "The Old Lamplighter" for starting revival services at dusk by lighting the lanterns. There lies T.J. "Jack" Robertson (1910-1988), ^{whose monument is on the grounds and} whose family gave funds in his

memory to install the first running water at the church. These were important Methodist funerals at Chinn's Chapel, as were many others.

The funeral was not an isolated event in the Chinn's Chapel Community in the past; instead it was then considered a ritualistic aspect of the dying process. Prior to the twentieth-century, deathbed vigils were social occasions, sometimes bringing people into the room from throughout the community. Death was not an occasion for isolation or solitude. A string of related rituals lent dignity to the dying process and brought comfort to the dying person and to the family. These rituals allowed the dying person to live fully in whatever time was left and helped survivors to achieve a fuller understanding and acceptance of their loss. Experiences of death in bed at home were as much what made a house a home as births in the marriage bed. The real tragedy of death was not life's end but rather an "unnatural" death, when it occurred, that is with no forewarning such as natural signs or inner convictions which allowed one to prepare for death according to local customs. When signs of imminent death were noted by those "watching with the dying," the closest relative or friend "called in the family." Family, close friends, and other important persons spoke brief "last words" with the dying person; then all watched and waited for death together. Final conversations with each visitor were solemn, important moments, and the dying person's last words were listened for and recorded. Clocks in the house were stopped to mark the time of death. The wake was both an occasion to honor the dead by recalling the events of the person's life as well as a practical matter of watching for signs of life. Before modern tests were developed, an unconscious person might sometimes be taken for dead. Once

death was certain, the wake ended, and funeral and burial events took place quickly as modern techniques of embalming were not yet known. The community gathered to comfort the bereaved, prepare the body, build the coffin, carry on the work of the household and farm, prepare the grave site, transport the coffin to the church and cemetery by wagon and team, and participate in the funeral and burial. In the past, the "human touch" was present throughout the dying process, exemplifying the community's concern, togetherness, and sympathy.⁴²

After the Civil War, advances in medicine, public health, communications, transportation, and mortuary science led to changes in people's responses to death and dying in the Chinn's Chapel Community. By the first quarter of the twentieth-century, the services of Hendrix and Savage Funeral Home, also Pembertons in Lewisville, were utilized.⁴³ In families who could afford their services, the body was now embalmed, dressed, and placed in a family-selected, ready-made casket, then returned to the home until the funeral. Neighbors held a new type of wake, bringing food and ushering in guests to view the body and pay their respects to bereaved family members. A call went out to the men of the community to gather in the morning to dig the grave, and they arrived with pickaxes and shovels for the difficult task of dealing with the hard clay and underlying rock formation of Chinn's Chapel Cemetery. The body was transported to Chinn's Chapel Church and then to the cemetery by motorized hearse. Families of very limited means held the traditional wake and accepted the willing services of the community. Professional floral arrangements were rare in the simple farm community, but crepe paper decorated tin cans

filled with wildflowers , when available, were a traditional Chinn's Chapel expression of sympathy. Females related to the deceased performed the honored task of removing flowers from the Chapel and transporting them to the cemetery. Their names were listed in newspaper funeral notices as "flower girls for the family." The funeral service for Civil War veteran W. Marion McCreless (1847-1934) was conducted by members of the Masonic Lodge of Lewisville, assisted by Rev. F.M. Groves of Denton. Pallbearers included his five grandsons, and "Flower girls were four young women of the community." ⁴⁴ "Flower girl" was a ritualistic funerary role which might be filled by relatives, chosen friends, or appointed community members, ^{sometimes of mature age.} Obituaries for members of the Chinn's Chapel Community generally appeared in the Lewisville Enterprise, the Denton Record Chronicle, and later in the Lewisville Leader and the Lewisville News. The cemetery remained a privately governed community-based association for many years.

The known caretakers of Chinn's Chapel Cemetery have been John C. Dillard (1891-1962), Robert Teague (1900-1979), Sylvester O. Mikel (1863-1958), Marvin Dillard (born 1915), and currently Roy Bradford (born,). Vandals desecrated the cemetery in July, 1994, damaging thirty headstones. ⁴⁵ This was a deeply felt hurt and outrage among the old farm families of the area as well as the Methodists of Chinn's Chapel United Methodist Church. Stories in local newspapers and word of mouth rallied residents of the surrounding communities and members of the Denton County Historical Commission to offer their support.

Over the years the Chinn's Chapel Cemetery Association had ceased to meet formally. Their existence is known only through names on a bill of sale as ^{cemetery} business

appears to have been conducted informally. In 1956 trustees were J.P. Pinkley (dates unknown), Frank Roy Pinkley (1895-1969), and Florence Trimble McLeod (1891-1987).⁴⁶ Though the perpetrators of the cemetery's desecration as yet remain unknown, the act itself led those interested in the cemetery to form a legally incorporated cemetery association with a board of directors, association officers, historian, and committees concerned with the preservation, beautification, and security of the site. Rev. Edd Painter (born 1926), who spent his boyhood days in the Chinn's Chapel Community, was the chief impetus for the new organization and improvements to the site.

Many have expressed an interest in the preservation of the log cabin in the cemetery. Having served as a temporary home for early pioneers, the first house of worship, and the first educational institution in Southern Denton County, it has come to represent the values of our pioneer farmer ancestors. Theirs was the courage to blaze new trails, to live daily with danger, to solve problems with a know-how born of living on the land, the love of family, God, and country, the pursuit of education, and the closeness of a caring community. This is the cultural heritage of pioneer farming life, rural American Methodism, and early log cabin public school education in North Texas. The same flowing freshwater springs which attracted pioneer settlement speak to us today of the past and the future. The Chinn's Chapel Cemetery site is historically significant in its physical representation of those values forged in pioneer settlement, the growth of rural Texas Methodism, the occupation of the land in farming, the education of the young, and the burial of the dead. There may be found what it has meant to live one's life in the Chinn's Chapel Community, a cultural repository

amidst the twentieth-century landscape now surrounding the site: light industry, brick homes, and heavy traffic heading for work in Dallas or other far-away destinations from nearby Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. The little cemetery on the hill serves to remind visitors, newcomers, and old-time residents alike that for the moment they have become a part of the stream of history of rural North Texas and stand on "the land of the blest."

END NOTES

¹ D.W.C. Huntington, lyrics, Tullius O'Kane, music, "The Home Over There," The Cokesbury Worship Hymnal, C.A. Bowen, ed. (Dallas: The Methodist Publishing House, 1938) 200.

² Ethel Bradley Calvert, "Chinn's Chapel," Oral History to Shirley B. Faile, Ph.D., May 9, 1989, Copper Canyon, Texas. Tape and Typescript.

³ "Landmarks make area distinct: Chinn's Chapel," Lewisville, Texas: Lewisville News, June 30, 1991, 62; Luann Stafford, "100th Anniversary: 1885-1985: Lewisville woman discusses history of Chinn's Chapel Road," Lewisville, Texas, Lewisville Leader, July 28, 1985, 4a; "Named for Early County Couple: Wives Made Pioneers Build Chinn's Chapel in 1858," Scrapbook No. 1, Emily Fowler Public Library, Denton, Texas; "Chinn's Chapel where pioneers prayed, died, and left this behind," Dallas, Texas, Airport News Advertiser, July 9, 1975, 1B.

⁴ Viola Bradley Cozby, "Mrs. Cozby Shares Data on Chinns Chapel Former Days" (sic), Lewisville, Texas, Lewisville Leader, December 12, 1969; See also "Viola Crozby provides added lore: Old Waketon, Chinn's Chapel Recalled" (sic); Lewisville, Texas, Lewisville Leader, September 14, 1967.

⁵ Ed F. Bates, History and Reminiscences of Denton County. (Dallas, Texas: Terrill Wheeler Printing Company, Inc., 1976) 74.

⁶ The Cottage Bible and Family Expositor...Explanatory Notes by Thomas Williams, Vol. 1 (Hartford: Carl, Tiffany, and Burnham, 1841) Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist Library, 1992; Ricky Tieg, "Chinn's Chapel Gets Boost with 149 Year Old Bible," Lewisville, Texas, Lewisville News, April 27, 1990, 4A; "Chinn's Chapel Celebrates Gift of Historic Bible," Dallas, Texas, North Texas United Methodist Reporter, April 20, 1990, 1A.

⁷ C.A. Bridges, History of Denton, Texas, From Its Beginning to 1960 (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1978) 59.

⁸ Seymour V. Connor, The Peter's Colony of Texas (Austin, Texas: The Texas State Historical Association, 1959) 120.

⁹ C.A. Bridges, History of Denton, 27; Walter N. Vernon, Methodism Moves Across North Texas (Dallas, Texas: The Historical Society of the North Texas Conference of the Methodist Church, 1967) 58-59.

¹⁰ "Chinn's Chapel: where pioneers prayed," 1B; Ed F. Bates, History and Reminiscences, 74.

¹¹ C.A. Bridges, History of Denton, 28-29.

¹² P. Richard Metcalf, The American People on the Western Frontier (West Haven, Connecticut: Pendulum Press, Inc., 1973) 13-14.

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³⁸ Record of Minutes of Commissioners' Court, May Term, 1884, 581, February Term, 1885, 8-9, Denton County Court House-on-the-Square, Denton, Texas; Luann Stafford, "Lewisville woman discusses history of Chinn's Chapel Road" (sic) Lewisville News, July 28, 1985, Lewisville, Texas; Bill Bradford, "They're Tearing Up Our Home," unpublished MS, Chinn's Chapel Scrapbook, Frankie Sprabary, Lewisville, Texas, December, 1994. ("Chinn Chapel Road" is the name approved by the Denton County Commissioners and the spelling on the road sign. The apostrophe 's' was either inadvertently omitted from "Chinn's" or deleted as an aid to pronunciation. Correct spelling for the names of the historic school, church, and cemetery includes the apostrophe 's' as in "Chinn's Chapel United Methodist Church." The Luann Stafford article "Lewisville woman discusses," also lists the construction date for the "new Chapel" as 1878; however, two other newspaper articles note the date as 1876. See Viola Bradley Cozby, "Mrs. Cozby Shares Data," and "Chinn's Chapel, where pioneers prayed," Denton Record-Chronicle, July 4, 1975. It is likely that the building was constructed in 1877 soon after the purchase of the land in 1877 due to the common practice of community gatherings to raise public buildings in one day at that time. The death of Elisha Chinn during the preceding year, 1876, may have influenced the decision to continue the name "Chinn's Chapel Methodist Church" for the new building.)

³⁹ Terry G. Jordan, Texas Graveyards: A Cultural Legacy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982) 21-22.

⁴⁰ Willie Mae Dillard, in Roy Bradford, Oral History to Shirley B. Faile, Copper Canyon, Texas: Chinn's Chapel Cemetery Decoration Day, May 3, 1988.

⁴¹ Stanley Burns, Sleeping Beauty: Memorial Photography in America (New York: Twelvetrees, 1990) 26; "In Memory of: Artifacts Related to Mourning in Nineteenth Century America," vol. 3, no. 4, Journal of American Culture (Winter, 1980) 650-652.

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⁴⁶Deed and Receipt of Sale, vol. 469, 112, June 3, 1961, Denton County Courthouse on the Square, Denton, Texas.