

HISTORY OF THE GRAHAM-ARGYLE CEMETERY

by

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Denton County was created and organized from Fannin County, Texas by the first State Legislature and named for John B. Denton. Census Records indicated 641 settlers were established in the county by 1850; 5,031 in 1860; 7,251 by 1870 and 18,143 by 1880. As the people came, so began the formation of small communities or settlements which served as centers for trade, education, worship, safety, social activities and in many instances provided a means of livelihood for the pioneers.

Many of the settlers coming to Denton County were fleeing the aftermath of the Civil War that had left burned and destroyed homes and confiscated lands. The westward bound Texas & Pacific Railroad brought Alabamians, Ketuckians, Tennesseans, along with other Southerners. They hoped to rebuild a life in a prosperous west. Some worked on the railroad, others trailed behind carrying their possessions and prepared to establish a new homestead when the time was right and the place was ideal. With these transplanted farmers came "King Cotton". Production figures indicated that by 1880, Texas led all states in cotton production and it was a major influence on the economic development of the state.

One such settlement was Graham, located 6 1/2 miles south of Denton city. The settlement was apparently named for Spencer Graham to whom 160 acres of land were originally patented on January 26, 1865. The settlement of Graham, Denton County, Texas, and the man Spencer Graham apparently have no connection with the town on Graham, Young County, Texas. Several other settlements dotted the area south of Denton—Prairie Mound, Litsey, Pilot Knob, Beulah, Lane and Stoney Ridge. These settlements generally

consisted of homes of several families and a building used to provide both the schooling and religious needs for the settlers.

The Graham Baptist Church was organized in a little box schoolhouse, known as the Graham Schoolhouse in 1876. Because of the school and church, an area located adjacent to the building soon came to serve as a cemetery for the community. The cemetery is on a sloping hillside overlooking a small stream of water, later known as the Graveyard Branch. Early settlers once entered the cemetery from the west after crossing the branch.

The first person known to have been buried in the Graham Cemetery is George Isbell, an infant boy who was born October 1, 1865, and died December 10, 1865. The grave marker is in two parts, the lower part being of native sandstone and the inscription is carved on granite. No other information is available. Other very early graves are those of two children of J. L. and A. F. Woods. A son was born September 9, 1874, and died on September 21, 1874. A daughter, Pearl, was born June 8, 1876, and died December 14, 1876. The children are buried side by side with the gravesite enclosed with a decorative metal fence. Both the Woods children and the Isbell child were buried in the area prior to the land being officially deeded for the purpose of a cemetery.

According to the Denton County Birth Records, four Jarrell men settled in Denton County in the last three decades of the 1880's. Three gravitated to the Graham area and one lived in Denton. Each man was married and sired a number of children. William Fountain Jarrell, Sr., lived on Sycamore Street in Denton and was a dry goods merchant in 1899. Caskey Jarrell came from Kentucky and married Cara Lindsay of Lewisville, Texas. He listed his occupation as farmer, carpenter and a Santa Fe Railroad employee by 1898.

Joseph Alfred Jarrell came from Lebon (Wilson County) Tennessee and listed his occupation as a farmer in 1892. His wife, Sarah Alma Strader, came from Marshfield, Missouri.

The family that played a predominate role in the formation of the Graham School, Graham Baptist Church and the Graham Cemetery was Dr. Edward William Jarrell (born January 7, 1832) and his wife, Lettitia E. Moser Jarrell (born October 21, 1838 in Tennessee). The Jarrells had ten children with the birth Of Barnett Newton Jarrell On December 31, 1881. Dr. Jarrell listed his occupation as physician and farmer. The family lived approximately two miles west of the Graham Cemetery, near what is now known as the Crawford Road and I-35W Intersection.

Charter members of the Graham Baptist Church were Dr. & Mrs. E. W. Jarrell and their three daughter--Mrs. Turner (Mattie) Faught, Mrs. John W. (Margarett) Faught and Mrs. Will Y. (Tollie) Fincher; Mr. & Mrs. Dick Lane and their two daughter; and Mr. & Mrs. R. Till Lane. Nellie D. Lane, wife of W. L. Lane, was born August 26, 1867 and died February 19, 1893, is buried in the Graham Cemetery.

The coming of the railroad began to change the life style of the inhabitants in the small settlements south of Denton. Between 1880 and 1882, the Texas & Pacific Railroad laid its tracks through the "Cross Timers" from Denton to Roanoke and on to Fort Worth---thus the birth of Argyle on November 7, 1881. The town of Argyle is located 1/2 mile south of the Graham settlement. Earlier the settlement had been known as Pilot Knob and Waintown. The popular story today is that Argyle was named for a garden in France by an anonymous railroad surveyor, apparently moved by Argyle's peaceful and simple serenity. The railroad had been granted areas of land on either side of the tracks to be divided into lots to encourage further development of the area.

With the advent of the railroad, providing a means to transport and receive merchandise more easily and conveniently, a business community began to serve the area. Farmer turned shopkeeper, purchased lots from the railroad, and contributed to the growth of the area by entering the business world.

More than one story has been told about how the town of Argyle was named. According to Sam D. Davis, who came to Argyle in 1885, and was a rural mail carrier there until he retired in 1939, recalls that the first site for the town was laid half way from Denton to Roanoke, about two miles from where the town now stands. At that time there were no settlers near the tentative townsite, and the town was moved to a convenient location for a school which could be attended by as many of the nearby settler children as possible.

Davis believes that the town at that time might have been called "Graham" after an old settler family. Will Williams, owner of Denton's Williams Department Store, confirms Davis' story with a tale of a family named Graham who settled near Denton Creek in the early 1840's. Williams believes that the family moved to Argyle when the railroad was built, or sometime before.

The presbytery organizing the Graham Baptist Church was composed of Rev. A. T. Thompson, J. O. Daniels and R. G. M. Eiland. The Sunday School was organized soon after the Church and Dr. E. W. Jarrell served as superintendent until his death on June 3, 1885. In 1887, two years after Dr. Jarrell's death, the Graham Schoolhouse burned and was never rebuilt. Consequently, the Church transferred its services to the Lane Schoolhouse, three miles east of Graham, where it continued until the Texas & Pacific Railroad was built through the area. A part of the Church moved to Argyle in 1891, a station on the railroad, which was 1/2 mile south of where the Church was originally organized. Those remaining at the Lane Schoolhouse organized another church, which they called Smyrna Baptist Church. Those moving to Argyle established the Argyle Missionary

Baptist Church which later became known as the First Baptist Church of Argyle, Texas. In 1899, the Church reorganized and services were held in the Presbyterian Church, Masonic Hall and the Methodist Church.

The Argyle First Baptist Church like most all the early churches in Texas used the "Mourner's Bench" (a bench or seat at the front of the Church or room, set apart for mourners or penitent sinners seeking salvation) in revival services. In the early days of this and other churches in Texas---people came to Church on foot, horseback, in oxen and horse drawn wagons, frequently coming 10 to 15 miles to attend Church on Sunday and remaining over for the night services and reaching home at midnight or later.

In 1909, the Church built its first church house which still stands today and now serves as the headquarters for the Argyle Volunteer Fire Department. The present home of the First Baptist Church of Argyle was built in 1963.

Dr. Jarrell was buried at Prairie Mound Cemetery, 3 miles west of Argyle. His widow, Lettitia E., died January 19, 1914 in Justin, Texas is also buried at Prairie Mound. A son of the Jarrell's, James E. W., (born March 7, 1871 and died December 19, 1894) is also buried at Prairie Mound. James E. W. Jarrell and his wife, Maggie, had a daughter, Marion (born August 19, 1894 and died September 14, 1894) who is also interned at Prairie Mound. Apparently after fire destroyed the Graham School and Church, the Jarrells participated in the Prairie Mound settlement activities due to the proximity to their home.

Another religious gathering place was "Johns' Well" located two miles west of Argyle on the Old Justin Road between the Jarrell homestead and the Prairie Mound community. Not only was the well a source of spring water for early Argyle residents, but it also served those who attended the "camp-meetings" held nearby. Camp meetings were held after the thrashing was com-

pleted in July. People in wagons and on horseback came there from every direction for many miles to attend the two to three week meetings. According to Denton County Deed Records, Volume Q, page 395, this land was purchased by Hardin W. Johns and his wife, Charlotte, from B. F. Parr and wife, Alice J. Parr, on April 7, 1875. Long time residents relate that Johns' Well was located on the north side of the Old Justin Road and the camp meeting grounds were on the south side of the road. At some unknown time, a second "Johns' Well" was hand dug on the camp grounds property on the south side of the Old Justin Road.

It was not until 1888, that the Graham Cemetery became official when the land being used for that purpose was deeded by C. N. Jarrell and his wife, M. T. Jarrell, to H. R. Fehlisson, G. W. Blair and D. C. McReynolds as trustees for the Graham Cemetery. To quote from the deed as found in Volume 33, page 400, in the Denton County Clerks' records, "The described land is deed to said Trustees and their successors a cemetery for the whites of the surrounding community", on May 9, 1888. In 1975, this location is described as 1/2 mile north of the town of Argyle on the old Fort Worth Highway between Argyle and Denton (now called Country Club Road). U. S. Highway 377 runs north and south on the west side of the Cemetery.

We can only assume that C. N. and M. T. Jarrell are descendants and/or relatives of Dr. E. W. Jarrell. Records are not available to verify just who C. N. Jarrell is. The term, Graham-Argyle Cemetery, can be attributed to Denton County Funeral Homes, whose directors used the term "Graham-Argyle" Cemetery to identify the cemetery location after the establishment of Argyle, Texas in 1881.

Only one of the trustees, H. R. Fehlisson, is known to be buried in the Graham-Argyle Cemetery. Mr. Fehlisson, a local shopkeeper, was born August 12, 1857, and died April 20, 1902. He is buried in the only above ground vault in

the Cemetery. Beside him is an infant son, Randolph, born January 13, 1885 and died January 24, 1885.

The Graham-Argyle Cemetery was definitely a community cemetery. There are numerous family plots--Paine, Boyles, Matthews, Scott-Hollihan, Freeman, Hardee, Fincher, Bullard, Cogdell, Horton, Jeter, Wood, Carpenter, Johnson and Davis-- just to name a few. There are approximately 238 graves in the Cemetery. Many of the family plots indicate that the children died at a very early age. There were epidemics of smallpox, cholera and influenza during the early settlers' time. There are 164 graves that are properly marked with identification. Some 74 graves are marked only by native sandstone. If any lettering was ever carved on these stones it has long disappeared from weathering. Some of the sandstone has been laboriously shaped, and lettering and designs painstakingly carved upon them. Another interesting factor discovered was the use of sea-shells to decorate the graves. There are three plots enclosed by native sandstone fences but there are not marks identifying who is buried within these closures. We have researched the Denton funeral home records and have found the names of 49 people buried in the Graham-Argyle Cemetery but we have not been able to establish their location in the Cemetery. There is no record that a plat was ever drawn and very few descendants are available to furnish the needed information.

The residents of the Graham community were self-sustaining farmers until the latter part of the 1800's when transportation and business opportunities became available to the settlers with the establishment of the railroad in 1881. In the 1876 Constitution, the state of Texas took control of all schools leaving very little if any local control of the schools. The parents could organize a school community but this had to endure the re-organization process yearly. With no power to tax locally for building programs, the destruction of existing facilities by fire, such as Graham in 1887, changes in population trends, and

the beginning of modern transportation soon spelled the end of the smaller settlements in the Argyle area. The settlers began to merge not only their occupations as farmer, craftsman, or businessman, but also their concept of residence by the turn of the century. The original post office was operated by Miss Emily Wilson from July 24, 1878 near Pilot Knob until it was moved to Argyle in 1881. Rural routes were established at that time with the mail being delivered by carriers in buggies or hacks pulled by one or two horses. The thirty mile route would take an entire day to complete the delivery of the mail.

According to an article published in July 8, 1910 Record and Chronicle of Denton, "the road leading south of town by the brickyard, known as the Denton-Argyle-Fort Worth Road, while it has been graded and graveled is in need of considerable repair and if something is not done it will be seriously damaged and the work previously done in a measure will be lost. A committee has been appointed by the Chamber of Commerce to solicit subscriptions along the route to be put with the funds already subscribed by the banks and businesses of the town." By 1911, there were 15 miles of surfaced roads in Denton County. In 1925, Denton County had 165 miles of highways and the migration from the "country" began as evidenced by the population figures of 230 in Argyle which dropped to 147 by 1947.

The growth of Argyle necessitated the establishment of a school. After fire destroyed the Graham Schoolhouse in 1887, a new centrally located schoolhouse was built, just west of the railroad tracks and east of the branch of water that runs through Argyle. The two room framed building housed grades one through ten and had an enrollment of fifteen to twenty pupils. Grades eleven and twelve were completed in Denton at Denton High School. The locale of the schoolhouse presented a problem, however, as heavy rains flooded the area around the school which made it difficult for students to get in and out of

the schoolhouse. To remedy the situation, one long time resident, B. W. Meadows, exchanged two acres of his land for the low land that flooded the former school. The Argyle Schoolhouse building was moved to the new site. A new building was constructed in 1927 and 1928. Also occurring about this time was the first consolidation of the Argyle School with another school in the area, Lane School. In the 1930's bus transportation enabled further consolidation of the Argyle area schools, forming what is now known as the Argyle Rural High School District. This site still serves as the location for the modern school plant of 1975, that boasts an enrollment of 406 with eighteen teachers covering kindergarten through the ninth grade.

The community of Argyle flourished in the early 1900's with a variety of businesses, services of the railroad and the establishment of a school and churches. Several fires and a tornado almost proved to be fatal to the business community, but the local citizenry rebuilt the town and lived to survive the Depression.

Just as the railroad was instrumental in bringing people and economic growth to Argyle, the automobile was equally instrumental in taking them away. As the soil became more and more drained of its nutrients from the growing of cotton, and the attack of boll weevils destroyed what cotton that did grow, agriculture practices changed for the farmer of the Argyle community. Peanuts, livestock and truck crops became a new means of livelihood; but the profitability was decreasing and sons of the Argyle farmers began to move to the city for employment. The town of Argyle decreased in size during the 1940's and 1950's until the second and current wave of immigrations began in the mid 1960's.

In addition to be the great shifting of population because of the military training program, there was during the years of 1941-1947, the greatest civilian population shift of any comparable period in Texas history. The building of the

great war plants caused the intercounty migration of approximately 500,00 persons. This migration was primarily from the rural counties to the big industrial centers and to the smaller centers where large war plants were located. On the basis of food ration card data as of 1943, it can be calculated that approximately 200 Texas counties, principally rural, lost population in varying degrees whereas the remaining 54 counties, largely those containing the industrial centers gained population. These gains were large in many instances. Although Denton County in its entirety did not suffer substantial losses, one could attribute this to what happened to the Argyle community due to its proximity to the Dallas-Fort Worth industrial complex and war plants.

Burials were fairly regular at the Graham-Argyle Cemetery until the late 1940's and includes graves of veterans of the Civil War, World War I and World War II. Prairie Mound Cemetery, located at the start of the "Prairie" west of Argyle, had been better maintained than the Graham-Argyle Cemetery and many of the Argyle residents preferred to utilize those facilities. The last burial at the Graham-Argyle Cemetery was Sena Boyles (May 19, 1889 to June 3, 1970) in a family plot. The Cemetery is not currently in use, having been abandoned and neglected for years until the recent restoration project.

The only governing body of the Graham-Argyle Cemetery is a group of dedicated volunteers working under the Argyle Bicentennial Cemetery Association. Restoration and maintenance have been progressing since July of 1974 under the guidance of W. T. "Bill" Meadows, John Thompson, Gus Cogdell, Wilton Newborn, Ralph Ayers, C. R. "Happy" Salmon, members of the Argyle Volunteer Fire Department and Boy Scouts. Restoration projects have included mowing, tree trimming, general clean-up, installing a flag pole and building a curved

driveway at the entrance.

A Decoration Day was held on July 13, 1975, with over 100 in attendance to view the once abandoned Cemetery. Thirty-six "newcomers" attended the Decoration Day activities. Many of these newcomers had provided the physical labor of restoring the Cemetery while others assisted with providing the musical program for the observance. Second, third and fourth generation descendants of families once active in the Graham community were much in evidence at the Decoration Day. There is no way that these people could be classified as "curious"----people that rever their past--yes-but not curiosity seekers.

The main project of a workday held August 16, 1975, in which 24 volunteers participated, was the resetting of 20 grave markers that were down. Through personal contacts with descendants, research, mailings and organizing workdays, a total of \$1980.70 has been raised for the maintenance of the Cemetery. The restoration and financial campaign was organized by Yvonne A. Jenkins of Argyle and Mrs. W. H. (Hattie Matthews) Madewell of Denton. It is hoped that in the near future, an official Cemetery Association will be formed. Although abandoned for years, the restoration project has created interest among both descendants and newcomers who have indicated that they want to be buried in the Cemetery.

The Denton County Historical Commission wishes to have this Cemetery declared a "Recorded Texas Historical Landmark" for the reason that the Graham-Argyle Cemetery with its proximity to and close association with the Graham School and the Graham Baptist Church provided an intergral part in the lives of the early settlers of the late 1800's. The Cemetery and Johns' Well are the two remaining traces of pre-1900 in the Argyle community and its historical significance is greatly appreciated and respected by both the older citizens and newcomers to the area as evidenced by the cooperation exhibited in the

restoration project.

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