

Justin, Texas

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I. CONTEXT

Although Justin would not see its first store until 1883, would not register its first plat until 1887, and would not be incorporated as a city until 1946, its early beginnings reach much further back into the settler's history of the "Grand Prairie". Like many other early Texas towns, Justin was known by several names before the official commissioning of the post office on October 4, 1887. Prior to that time, there are references to Justin and the immediate Justin area as: Denton Creek Settlement, Trail Creek Settlement, The Icarian Settlement, New Icara, and Justine (although that temporary name appears to be a simple governmental error that was rectified within the year—a historical typo).

¹ Located in the rich, fertile, softly rolling prairie lands of north central Texas, Justin is situated at the significant confluence of Denton Creek, Oliver Creek, and Trail Creek. Currently, the city of Justin covers 2.4 square miles, and is located slightly northwest of Fort Worth, a few miles south of Denton and a bit west of Dallas, which places it on the northwest edge of the DFW Metroplex, and near the southwest border of Denton County.

The value of this Texas territory was reflected in the early struggles over its ownership. The governments of the Republic of Texas, the United States, and Mexico, as well as the indigenous Native American tribes all fought wholeheartedly—both legally and physically—to try and ensure possession and ownership of the territory and its abundant natural resources. Long before the colonists began to move into Texas, many native Indian tribes roamed within the lands of the "Grand Prairie" of North Texas. As the early settlers began to filter in, the Texas Rangers were stationed in the region with the mission of securing the area. The resulting land development challenged the ability of the Native Americans to live as they had been, which resulted in scores of battles and skirmishes. This bloody time in early Texas history is chronicled in countless books on the Native Americans, the Texas Rangers, and the history of the area. One such book, *History and*

Reminiscences of Denton County by Ed. F. Bates, chronicles an overview of the period and notes that in the early days of the Republic of Texas, President Sam Houston appointed a Commissioner of Indian Affairs.² In addition, a commission was formed to negotiate with the various tribal leaders, and eventually a tenuous agreement was created. On September 29, 1843 a treaty was signed between representatives of the Republic of Texas and the following tribes who inhabited north Texas: Caddos, Cherokees, Delawares, Iones, Keechies, Paluxes, Tehuacanas, Wacos, and the Wichitas. Although the Comanches were dominant in this area, they declined to participate in the treaty.³

The same abundant natural resources that provided life sustenance for the Native Americans (readily available water, fertile soils, and bountiful wildlife suitable for hunting) made the Justin area an advantageous site for early settlers to develop. Texas Rangers set up several stations in the Grand Prairie area (Pilot Knob, Elm Station, Hickory Station, and Johnson Station) and the Ranger patrols traveled outward from each station until they met on the trail. In this way, the Rangers were able to provide some protection for the settlers and start to establish the territory for farmers, ranchers, and settlers.⁴ This proved to be a generations long battle for the native people that still has resonances in our America of today.

The land was highly desirable, but the reasons for this interest differed slightly for each group. The early settlers were interested in the area because of the hope and promise of a new life with ample acreage and nearly unlimited opportunities for agricultural and livestock production. The early settlers were promised ownership of large tracts of land. The Native American tribes knew that area creeks were full of fish, the wooded creek areas provided cover for deer, and the open prairie was perfect for buffalo, turkey, prairie chickens, and other game birds. The fertile ground of Denton County produced orchards of wild plums, natural vineyards of mustang and fox grapes, persimmons, several varieties of nuts, and a profusion of honey.⁵ Both groups found that the land was perfect for growing corn and wheat—subsequently the area developed as a dominant wheat producing region, and had some success with cotton production. In short, although the land provided much the same opportunities to both groups, the early settlers had ownership promises from the Republic of Texas, and later from the United States government. Although the Native Americans had lived in

this area for many generations, their culture did not require "ownership" of their territory in the same way that the incoming settlers expected.

One notable battle between the settlers and the native peoples resulted in the death of John B. Denton, in May of 1841. The juncture of Denton Creek and Oliver Creek was where Denton was buried after the battle near Fort Worth had claimed his life.⁶ Although his body was briefly unattended following the heat of the battle, a squad of men returned to the scene of his death and gently carried his body, on horseback, to his first burial site on the banks of Oliver Creek. His body was later moved by friends to the John Simpson Chisum property (Texas Centennial Marker #6960, 1936) in the northwest part of the county, and again to his final resting place on the grounds of the Denton County Courthouse.⁷ Time distinguished this creek juncture as historically significant, not only for this early burial but also for the 1848 French Icarian settlement that blossomed with high hopes yet withered within two years.

II. OVERVIEW

Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836 and joined the United States in 1845, but in between that time, the newly formed Republic of Texas was badly in need of settlers. Early in 1841, during the Fifth Congress of the Republic of Texas, an act was passed that granted 640 acres of land to married settlers, and 320 acres to single men. This seemingly generous act, designed to encourage settlement of the Southwest, saw its fair share of controversy over the next half-century. Mismanaged by land agents, challenged by settlers and Native Americans alike, complicated by continuing battles between Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the United States over the exact lines of division between those powerful entities, the land act of 1841 began a long and illustrious journey towards delineating newly charted territories in Texas and other nearby areas.⁸ The United States government issued contracts that provided land for settlers—first in 1841, and subsequently revised in 1841 and again in 1843.

It was during this time (1841) that the Peters Colony began allocation of land, under the guidance of Englishman and land investor, William Smalling Peters, as an agent of the petitioners. Peters Colony was established through a land grant from the Republic of Texas⁹ and was organized in hopes of attracting middle

class English settlers. Henry Oliver Hedgcoxe, also from England, was the Peters Colony local agent. According to Mary Jo Cowling's book, *Geography of Denton County*, Hedgcoxe was responsible for the naming of many area creeks and waterways.¹⁰ His daughters, Harriet and Catherine, were the namesakes of local creeks, as was his wife (Elizabeth Creek) and his dog (Trail Creek). Cowling maintains that Oliver Creek was named after either Hedgcoxe himself, or his son, both of whom carried the same name. Local tradition is in conflict with this reference and assigns the namesake of Elizabeth Creek to a daughter of John B. Denton.¹¹ Regardless of the name origins, both Trail Creek and Oliver Creek run through the Justin area, and the other creeks (Elizabeth, Catherine and Harriet) are all slightly south and east of this vicinity. Not long after Peters Colony agents began executing contracts and placing settlers in north Texas, the disputes and lawsuits began. Claims of unfulfilled promises and broken agreements filled the settlers' minds and hearts. This tension built to a climax in 1852, when many north Texas settlers revolted against Oliver Hedgcoxe in an event known as the Hedgcoxe War (1975 THC subject marker #5351), in which the residence of the land agent was raided, documents removed, and Hedgcoxe was unceremoniously banished. Eventually many of the records were uncovered, as they had been deposited with Dallas authorities, but some records of Peters Colony contracts were lost. In 1844, after a period of extreme financial difficulties, the Peters Colony was reorganized and became the Texas Emigration and Land Company. The United States reissued many of the contracts and land agreements from this period and most of these legal battles were settled by the mid 1870s.¹²

One of the Peters Colony battles concerned land near Justin that was being settled by French immigrants. The New Icarians were a middle class group of French idealists whose uniting principles of peace, justice, equality, and fraternity stood the test of time, even though their first attempt at settlement in the United States did not. The original land contract for these settlers was negotiated by their founder, Etienne Cabet and W. S. Peters, in London in early September of 1847. Cabet appointed Adolphe Gouhenant to lead the "Premiere Avante-garde", a group of sixty-nine Icarian settlers who sailed from Le Havre, France on February 3, 1848 and arrived in New Orleans on March 27, 1848.¹³ On March 31st they boarded a steamship, which they believed would take them up the Mississippi River, allow them to connect with the Red River, and thereby

transport them to their final destination without a great deal of difficulty. Unfortunately, the Red River was not navigable beyond Shreveport, Louisiana because of a vast dam of uprooted trees. The new French settlers were met by Cabet's agent, Charles Sully, and escorted to a settlement in Titus County named Sulphur Prairie, where they rested for a few days. The lead party made their arduous cross-country journey to Cabet's New Icaria, only to be met with the near insurmountable complexities of the Peters' contract. Gouenant returned to Sulphur Prairie to gather the remainder of the initial party, and this second group arrived in New Icaria on June 1, 1848. Additional settlers arrived on August 29, 1848, led by Pierre Favard. The Peters' contract provided that the Icarians would be allocated thousands of acres in sections and half-sections, as well as bonus acreage which doubled the allocation.¹⁴ In addition, the contract promised to build cabins and fences, furnish initial provisions, and generally assist with all aspects needed for successful settlement; however the nearest Colony store was in Stewartsville, a location too distant to be of immediate service to the settlers. The agreement proved to be too much for the financially and organizationally challenged Peters Colony and promises were broken. The nearly abandoned settlers, stranded without access to adequate supplies and materials, also labored under the details of the contract timeline. In order to fully qualify for the land grants, the settlers were to have made improvements on each parcel of non-contiguous land by July 1st, little more than one month after their arrival. Improvements included a cabin or building and evidence of an adequate start at sustainable business endeavors, either agriculture or livestock. These limitations, combined with the hardships encountered by people expecting a climate similar to that which they left behind in France, proved to be overwhelming for the settlers. The community buried the last of the fever victims, and abandoned the territory in September of 1848. The remainder of the settlers returned to Sulphur Prairie, journeyed to Shreveport, and finally arrived back in New Orleans. Illness, fever, harsh climatic conditions, broken promises, the stress of unrealistic deadlines, and the debilitating effects of dashed dreams combined to cost the lives of nearly one-fourth of the settlers.¹⁵ The survivors of the Texas debacle were later joined by their founder, Cabet, and they moved to establish a colony in Illinois and subsequent colonies in St. Louis, Iowa and California.

The course of history and cultural development might have been very different if the New Icarian colony had persisted. The Justin and north Texas areas would have been infused with a French sensibility, much like New Orleans, with a heightened level of European cultural and social awareness. The French settlers hoped to be able to grow crops, such as grapes, that they had produced in their native country.¹⁶ The subsequent agricultural development of Justin and the north Texas prairie led to the area being a leader in production of wheat, corn, and cotton. The French influence could have established grapes as a viable crop, long before the 21st century trend towards award-winning Texas wines. While areas later to be called Texas were still being roamed by buffalo and Native Americans, France was experiencing periods of enormous cultural significance in the fine arts, architecture, politics, and sociology. France had already experienced a social revolution that was based on the vastly different life available to the "haves" and the "have nots". The Icarians believed in social equality and community in a way that pre-dated recognition in the United States (and Texas) of the need for Civil Rights, Women's Equality and community wide social services.

The late 1840s saw some additional settlement activity in the immediate Justin area. In a letter from T. R. Allen to Ed. F. Bates dated August 31, 1916, Allen outlines the early settlement days of the colony that was to become Justin. Allen reports that in 1847, his family was one of the twenty families that left Missouri for Denton County and that many of them eventually settled in the Justin area.¹⁷ The large, extended Allen family spread out over southwestern Denton county and they were later joined by various members of the Peter Harmonson family, who moved over from Holford Prairie, which was a bit east of Justin, near the area that later became known as Lewisville (for more information on Holford Prairie see Old Hall Cemetery THC sesquicentennial marker, 1986). The 1850 census lists Peter Harmonson (December 18, 1797 - January 9, 1865) as a 49 year old farmer with three children; Zerrill Jackson (also known as Z.J. or Jack) Harmonson (March 3, 1822 - December 2, 1881), William Perry (also known as W.P. or Perry) Harmonson (May 29, 1836 - August 10, 1907), and Martha Harmonson. One of Jack Harmonson's sons, Peter Coleman Harmonson, died in a tragic Denton Creek crossing accident when they attempted to forge the swollen creek and their carriage overturned. He was only 32 years old. His wife also died in the accident and although their young child was in

the carriage during the fatal crossing, the child was rescued. These early settler names proved to be dominant in the area for generations to come; the Justin Cemetery list of graves includes ten Harmonsons, and the Elizabeth Creek Cemetery lists twenty-five people with that family name. Another early family name in the area was Allen. Dr. Thomas Richard Allen (October 27, 1846 - April 2, 1928) was the author of the previously mentioned 1916 letter to Ed Bates. The Allen family moved to Denton County when T.R. was one year old. Dr. Allen and his son, Dr. Joseph Allen, were in medical practice together in Justin for many years.

Examination of early land patents and deed transfers reveals a great deal of settlement activity in the mid and late 1800s. A patent dated April 16, 1857 registered much of the area to land agent Stephen R. Roberts. By 1857 a school house was built on Oliver Creek in the "Denton Creek Settlement" and was subsequently moved closer to town.¹⁸ In 1872, L. S. Helm began work on organizing areas of Justin for sale. Deed transfer records indicate that land near "Old Town" was being divided. Old Town or Original Town (OT), which refers to the core of the settlement, was centered around Main Street (now called 4th Street) and the railroad tracks. OT is a designation that is still used in Justin Planning and Zoning maps. 1883 saw the opening of a general store, the establishment of a doctor's office, and additional school activity. The store opened on Christmas Day, and was established by John W. Berry (October 5, 1858 - August 5, 1928), who was later a postmaster in Justin.¹⁹ Dr. W. H. Pennington (October 27, 1855 - May 9, 1940) opened his practice, and subsequently this family name became quite prominent in Justin's medical, business, and educational history. A small frame school known as Trail Creek School was erected north of Trail Creek by Perry Harmonson and was listed in the Denton County Commissioners court report of area schools by 1884.²⁰ Justin did not have its permanent name yet, but it was already established as a center of settlement activity, trade, and commerce.

The early discussions concerning the northern route for the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe (GC & SF) railroad out of Fort Worth can be noted from a resolution made on September 8, 1884 by the board of directors of GC & SF to send an engineer to inspect possible routes leading north from Fort Worth to "Indian Territory" (now Oklahoma). This action began a legal battle between the Indian nation and the railroad company. The Native Americans maintained that the Treaty of 1866 dictated that there was to be only one east/west route and

only one north/south route through their territory.²¹ In addition to the legal battle with the Native American entities, the route chosen by GC & SF resulted in a great deal of consternation from the leading citizens of nearby Denton. In January of 1886 city officials from Fort Worth, Gainesville, and Denton were in Galveston conferring with the directors of GC & SF.²² Denton sent Mayor O.P. Poe, J.W. Jagoe, and H.M. Spaulding to persuade the railroad company to extend the line through their community. By May of 1886, Judge J.A. Carroll was authorized on behalf of Denton to offer a financial incentive of \$20,000, free right of way through the county, and grounds for the depot site. Although the larger communities of Gainesville, Dallas, Decatur and Grapevine all attempted to convince the GC & SF decision-makers that their town was the right town to host the route extension, the tiny town of Justin would be on the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe line between Fort Worth and Purcell, and was destined to receive the development boost that accompanied the railroad route.

The northern expansion of the GC & SF was directly tied to a purchase merger between Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe (AT & SF) and the aforementioned GC & SF, which culminated with an agreement, signed on March 3, 1886.²³ Because Texas law required that the headquarters of any railroad company in the state be located within the state, the merger maintained GC & SF as a subsidiary of AT & SF (which remained the case until the Texas laws on headquarters location changed in 1965). Part of the financial requirements of the merger acquisition deal specified that the GC & SF group would construct over 300 miles of track in the north Texas region within one year.²⁴

One of the men who was responsible for making this incredible development possible was eminent railroad and municipal engineer Walter Justin (W. J.) Sherman. The city of Justin, Texas was named after this man²⁵, who was prominent in the development of the American railway system. Sherman was born in 1854 in Ohio and graduated from Cornell University with two degrees in Civil Engineering. Under the leadership of the President of GC & SF, Mr. George Sealy, Sherman was instrumental in making the 300 miles in 300 days²⁶ expansion of track that characterized the north Texas story and fulfilled the terms of the merger contract. This expansion took place in 1886. Sherman was the chief construction engineer who was responsible for major development of the railroads of the Southwest. His input was vital to the Board of Directors of GC & SF as

they made decisions about track routing.²⁷ In addition to his work on railroads, he was instrumental in the fabrication of major bridges and the construction of the Galveston jetties.²⁸ His work in his native Ohio included major municipal buildings, waterworks, bridges, and docks. He retired after a 50 year career as a Civil Engineer. In addition to his extensive work as an engineer, Sherman was a scholar, writer, and a historian of the early American period. He was president and editor of the Historical Society of Northwest Ohio from 1929 until his death on April 16, 1937. Although Walter Justin Sherman eschewed political life and social prominence²⁹, it is notable that his sister (Mary Nancy Sherman) was thrust into both of these aspects of life in 1886 when she married the son of the 19th President of the United States, Rutherford B. Hayes.³⁰ Birchard Austin Hayes and Mary Sherman were married in 1886, five years after President Hayes was in office, and at the same time that W. J. Sherman was in one of his most active periods in the railroad industry in Texas and the Southwest. Newspaper reports of the wedding event recount a scene of lush celebration which had a double purpose—the union of the happy couple as well as the celebration of a wedding anniversary of the President and his wife. The celebration accounts reference abundant flowers, highly stylish attire, sophisticated attendees, and plentiful food. Of course, the celebration guests included the brother of the bride, W. J. Sherman.

Justin, Texas was named for Walter Justin Sherman, in honor of his many and varied accomplishments, particularly those in the southwestern United States. The forefathers of Justin understood the significance of Sherman's contributions in the field of Civil Engineering, but it is quite likely that they also realized that this man was a notable figure in America because of his personal as well as professional contributions to the advancement of our country. After all, they chose to commemorate his life by naming their town after him—a task they no doubt considered extensively. Unlike many other Texas towns, they did not choose to name their city after a local landowner, nor after a county in another state where they once lived. They chose Walter Justin Sherman with good reason.

This little north Texas town got its official name on January 25, 1887 when Thomas J. Wheeler was established as the postmaster of Justine. John W. Berry was sworn in as postmaster of Justine on May 2, 1887 and on October 4, 1887 Mr. Berry was officially assigned as the Postmaster for JUSTIN.³¹ A name at last. By

1887, the railroad activity and area land agents brought a notable rise in the development of Justin as an established town. A public sale of town lots was advertised in *The Dallas Morning News* for an event on June 7, 1887. Justin now had an official name and was off to a roaring start as a center of social, economic, and agricultural activity that was to dominate the area for the next century and beyond.

Fires and storms

Although Justin is usually a quiet place to live, it has had its share of natural and unnatural disasters. The most major natural disaster to strike Justin happened in the spring of 1896. On May 15th a tornado (or cyclone as they were called at that time) swept through Justin. Most of the business section of town was flattened and destroyed, as were many homes in the area. In addition, the school was destroyed. There were numerous serious injuries but only one death was reported because of this incident. The same tornado caused major damage to Sherman, Texas and other area locales. In Sherman, many more lives were lost and the property damage was quite extensive. In Justin, the wind force was so great that metal railroad tracks were twisted and bent, and additional damage to the town's businesses and homes was caused by flooding. Many of the early Justin businessmen managed to rebuild their stores but disaster struck again with a downtown fire on December 23, 1899. Many businesses were again devastated. Weather terrified the local residents again in early May of 1900, when a tornado touched down near Justin and sent local residents scurrying to shelter. December proved to be a dangerous month for fire in Justin when the downtown area was heavily damaged yet again on December 22, 1901. In 1902, a fire on a passenger train in the station at Justin caused extensive damage to the train cars but no injuries. May 18, 1902 brought a severe storm with excessive winds and major damage to the town. The *San Antonio Gazette* reported on houses that were blown down in Justin on June 4, 1907. The strong spring storms of the region reared their ugly head again on May 26, 1908 when extensive flooding occurred in town because of a Grand Prairie thunderstorm. 1910 saw another fire downtown and 1928 brought another brush with a tornado. During the devastating period of 1896 to 1910, the little town of Justin saw ten disastrous events, starting with the significant tornado and repeatedly hammering the young town with

fire, wind, and floods. Yet, from the ashes rose a city. Determined early residents ensured the future of Justin through hard work and belief in the future.

Schools and Businesses in Justin

The potential economic prosperity of a burgeoning town often depends on those willing to invest in its future. One way to secure a future is through education. The early settlers of Justin established various small schools in the area, but in August of 1902 the townspeople of Justin voted to incorporate for free school purposes.³² On November 1, 1902 a bond election passed which provided \$2,000 for a schoolhouse building.³³ By the summer of 1905 a decision had been made by the citizens, led by Dr. Thomas Richard Allen, to provide additional opportunities for education of the town's young people, and plans began for Pennington College—a preparatory school and high school equivalent of the time.³⁴ In 1913 the Pennington College building and several adjoining lots were sold to the trustees of the Baptist Church of Justin.³⁵ The church added an educational building to the complex in 1948, remodeled the sanctuary in 1952, and a second floor was added to the educational building in 1957.³⁶ The core of the original Pennington College remains intact in Justin and is currently a wedding and special event venue, The Country Abbey. Eventually Justin schools would become part of the consolidated school district in the area, Northwest Independent School District, which covers over two hundred square miles and draws students from many small towns and cities.

One of the first businesses to appear in small towns is often some form of banking institution. In Justin, the Citizens Bank began operations in the summer of 1904. By February of 1905, the bank officials were able to break ground on a new building. In January of 1907 the Citizens Bank became Justin State Bank under new incorporation with the following names listed as organizers: J.C. Heath, G. Gibbs, W.N. Shoreur, J.W. Spencer, W.H. Pennington, J.C. Scott, A. Holloway, and S.T. Coleman. Another bank, the Farmers State Bank, opened in Justin in February of 1913 with A.M. Wilson, J.H. Allen, and J. M. Hardeman as organizers, but by January of 1916 the two Justin banks combined under the auspices of Justin State Bank. In the spring of 1955, Justin's only bank was robbed by a gunman who stole approximately \$2,000. The bank lost \$20,000 to a robbery in 1970 and \$44,700 in 1975 to another robbery. The 1970s era robberies were are part of a spree undertaken by

two masked bandits³⁷ who terrorized Rhome, Justin, Milford, Chico, Tom Bean and other small Texas towns for over fourteen years. They were finally brought to justice in 1985 when the "most dangerous couple in Texas" was arraigned before a federal magistrate in Fort Worth.³⁸ Lawrence Edward Byrom received a fifty year federal prison sentence and his wife received a twenty-five year sentence. The crime saga that became the life of the Byroms had several highly publicized episodes including jail breaks. He died of cancer while still in federal prison in 1997 and is buried in Aurora Cemetery near the town where he was born, in the region he once terrorized through armed robbery, auto theft, kidnapping, and prison breaks.

Other businesses in Justin fared well without such illustrious ties. A letter signed only with the initials T.J.W. appeared in *The Dallas Morning News* on March 9, 1887 and described the town (which was known at that moment as Justine). The description lists a "first-class blacksmith shop", a grocery, and a drug store. The article also mentions significant prospects for wheat and an excellent opening for a dry goods or hardware store. TJW goes on to say, "For health, I don't think it [Justine] can be beaten in the State."³⁹ By 1901 the need for these amenities had been filled. An article in *The Dallas Morning News* concerning a railroad maximum freight bill that was pending in the legislature states the stance of various local businessmen on the issue.⁴⁰ The list of businessmen and stores in town included A.D. Dawson as a grocer, E. C. Shoemaker's hardware store, Dr. W. H. Pennington as a leading grain shipper, and A. Holloway as the operator of a dry goods store.

The business of medicine was a field that attracted three generations of Allen's. Two Allen family doctors were significant businessmen who started work together in Justin during the first decade of the 20th century. Dr. Thomas Richard (T.R.) Allen was born in Missouri on October 27, 1846 and he died in Justin on April 2, 1928. Dr. T.R. Allen had a distinguished early career in Wise County, where he served as Justice of the Peace, Tax Accessor, County Commissioner, and County Sheriff.⁴¹ After this full career in public service, he attended St. Louis College of Physicians and Surgeons. As a newly educated doctor, Dr. T.R. Allen joined his son in practice in Justin in 1905. His son, Dr. Joseph Hugh Allen (affectionately known as "Doc Joe"), opened his practice in Justin on December 2, 1901 and served the community as a physician and active citizen until his retirement in the late 1950s. Early in his career, Doc Joe had to travel across the county on horseback in order

to serve his far-flung patients. Although in 1912 he started driving a car to tend to his rural patients, he vividly remembered the difficulties of the 1918 flu epidemic, which was compounded by bad weather and impassable roads and forced him onto horseback once again. During his more than half-century in practice, he delivered over 3,000 babies, often having a hand in bringing forward several generations of Justin citizens.⁴² It is interesting to note that the Allen family contained three generations of medical men. Although Richard F. Allen was informally trained, Dr. Joe's grandfather (and father to Dr. T.R.) was also a medical practitioner in Texas. The Allen family, with one-year-old Thomas Richard in tow, came to Denton County in 1847. The 1959 death of Dr. Joe Allen marked the end of an era.

1903 and 1904 were prosperous and fertile years for the grain producers in this area and the building of major production facilities, mills and elevators brought the total number of elevators in Justin to four by the fall of 1904. Justin Mill and Elevator was added to the count in 1910 and at least one of these facilities remains in operation in Justin today. Brad's Confectionary was in operation by the late 1920s, and was owned by J. E. Bradley, writer and historian. An article in the *Denton Record-Chronicle* reported the following businesses in Justin in 1914: two dry goods stores, two drug stores, two hardware stores, four grocery stores, one flour mill, four elevators, two cotton gins, one newspaper, two banks, two restaurants, one confectionery, one moving picture theatre, one garage, one lumber yard, two barber shops, and two blacksmiths.⁴³

In early July of 1934, Justin was the site of an altercation between law enforcement and an owner of the City Cafe. The City Cafe was co-owned by Jimmie Glasscock and Boyd Wilkerson. Glasscock had only lived in Justin for about nine weeks; he previously lived in Fort Worth. At about 10:30 at night on July 2nd, two Denton County Deputy Sheriffs (Carl "Red" Garrett and Hugh Elliott) made a liquor raid on the cafe. A shooting occurred as the officers attempted to prevent the cafe occupants from destroying the evidence. A struggle between Deputy Garrett and Glasscock resulted in the fatal shooting of Deputy Garrett. Immediately after shooting Garrett, Glasscock turned his gun on the other Deputy Sheriff, Hugh Elliott. Glasscock's gun jammed and Deputy Elliott was able to defend himself, which resulted in a fatal gunshot wound to Glasscock. He died in a Denton hospital, about three hours after the incident. A physician attending Deputy Sheriff Garrett

reported that the bullet he received had severed at least part of his spinal cord. Garrett died in a Denton hospital during the evening hours on July 3rd, 1934.⁴⁴ Glasscock and the other cafe owner, Boyd Wilkerson, were under indictment at the time of the shooting. Two previous liquor raids on the Cafe had yielded charges of illegal liquor possession and intent to sell for Glasscock and Wilkerson. They had been released on bond and were awaiting grand jury action at the time of the shooting. Wilkerson was briefly jailed in connection with the shooting but was released after a two hour jury deliberation. Deputy Sheriff Garrett lived just south of Justin with his wife and young daughter. He was survived by his immediate family, as well as by his parents and two brothers (all Justin residents), and a son from a previous marriage.⁴⁵

On November 7, 1946 Justin became official in another way—with city incorporation. At that time, W. I. Bishop was signed in as the first mayor. It is interesting to note that this date is one hundred years after Denton County was officially established by the state of Texas. Development in the city continued steadily throughout the latter half of the 20th century as the businesses and residents grew in number. Although the current population of Justin is only slightly over three-thousand, the growth has been consistent and moderate. Unlike so many other small towns in the Grand Prairie area near Justin, this town has survived and thrived.

III. Significance

Justin is a spoke on a regional wheel. The region represents a very rich agricultural area, one that produces abundant quantities of wheat, corn and cotton. Justin was an important stop on the GC &SF railroad because of the commerce that had developed in the town, as well as because of the regional structure that this town represents. The railroad between the Gulf of Mexico and the territories north of Texas provided an important path for commerce and people, ensuring that supplies and goods were readily available and providing significant opportunities for fortunes to be made. Goods from the north could be transported and sold all the way to the Gulf. Goods from all across Texas could be transported north, and from there they could be shipped to points west or east along the burgeoning railway system. In short, this area was a part of a larger picture that became a thriving commerce system, transporting cattle, grain, timber, and other supplies. In addition, people were now able to move more freely around the United States. No longer was the pioneer settler left to feel like

he was in an abandoned outpost, nearly alone and virtually unprotected. No longer were that settler and his family stuck to the territory without access to the outside world. And no longer was the settler forced to contain his commerce to the immediate area. Transportation led to thriving commerce, and eventually to an extensive highway system.

Justin came into existence shortly before the railroad came through town but it was a simple settlement and did not have an official name, an official government, or an official collective mission. People gathered in order to share common problems and seek unified solutions. Settlers in this area grew food crops and raised livestock in order to feed their families. This need, combined with the fertile ground and an environment that was conducive to raising hoofed animals, led to a thriving agricultural community. Justin has long been a leader in the agricultural business of wheat, corn and cotton production, as well as a participating member in the history of the vast livestock ranches of north Texas. Over the years, countless tons of grain and feed have been processed through Justin's mills, silos, and elevators. Although the railroad tracks that pass through the middle of town have less connection with the commerce of our city than they did in the past, they remain a staunch symbol of our beginnings. Many Justin families prospered during the late 20th century because of railroad salvage businesses. Unlike so many small Texas towns, Justin found a way to survive and thrive once the railroad yard was no longer our commercial focus. We adapted by running vast salvage yards that harvested railroad shipping overflow and railroad derailment products. Several businesses in town have been extremely successful in the salvage field and continue to maintain strong businesses through the sales of salvage, seconds, and discounted items. Our businesses thrived and shifted, morphed and adapted as time marched on and needs evolved. Our dry goods stores turned into grocery stores. Our blacksmith shops turned into traveling farriers. We opened lumber yards and gasoline stations, auto supply stores, a cabinet shop, and a fine furniture store. Justin State Bank has been under consistently steady management and survived uncertain financial times when hundreds of other banking establishments in the country failed. Justin State Bank remains a locally owned, locally managed, locally operated financial institution. In 1887 we had a drugstore; in 2013 we have a pharmacy. Until 2012, that pharmacy had been owned and operated by Justin residents for decades. We still

have cafes and gift shops, a barber shop and a place or two to buy liquor—then as now. Although we no longer have a hotel, we now have Bed and Breakfast lodging. Our churches remain strong and many of the faithful followers are relatives of the original founding fathers of Justin. Our community continues to provide educational opportunities for hundreds of young people from various towns in southwest Denton County. Our 1913 three-story school house gave way to a mid-century elementary school, which is now the site of Justin City Hall. We have streets named Harmonson, Jackson, Hardeman, and Allen—reflecting our heritage from early settler families. We have streets whose names recognize the importance of the railroad—Topeka, Gulf, and Atchison. Bishop Park was named to honor our first mayor. In 2008, a group of local artists painted a 60 x 100' downtown mural that reflects our heritage. The mural depicts one of the original cotton gins, a 1930s era service station, the original train depot, Doc Joe Allen, and a rural ranch scene. The town is still peppered with Holloways, Hardemans, Hendersons, Cates, Dooleys, Tallys, Faughts, and Leutys and the pioneer spirit that accompanied those family names in the late 1800s is still apparent in our town of 2013.

From the Icarians, through agricultural development, and expansion because of railroad access, Justin continues to straddle the railroad tracks, in the midst of the confluence of Denton Creek, Oliver Creek, and Trail Creek. Amidst natural and unnatural disasters; fires, floods, tornados, armed bank robberies, and trail derailments, with strong, "Grand Prairie" style determination, Justin continues to grow—slowly but surely—and remains a center of commerce, business, and community for southwest Denton county.

Timeline - Justin Marker narrative

1835-36 Texas Revolution - Independence from Mexico

1841 Act of Congress granted 640 acres to married settlers, 320 acres to single

1841 John B. Denton was buried near the juncture of Oliver Creek and Denton creeks.

1845 At the age of 9, W. P. (Perry) Harmonson moved with his parents to Texas from Missouri.

1841 Peters started colonization of North Texas.

- 1845 Texas joined the United States.
- 1846 Denton County established by 1st Legislature of the State of Texas
- 1847 Twenty or twenty-five families left Missouri for Denton County and settled in area of Justin. Harmonson was already here and they met him.
- 1848 The Icarian Settlement at Oliver Creek and Denton Creek juncture
- 1850 Census listed Peter Harmonson, 49 year old farmer with three children. Also listed Zerrill Jackson Harmonson, 26 year old farmer.
- 1852 Revolt against Oliver Hedgcoxe, Peter's local agent. Many records lost.
- 1883 First store established (on Christmas Day) by John W. Berry (who was later Postmaster).
- 1883 Small frame structure school was established north of Trail Creek by Perry Harmonson. Was listed in 1884 Denton County Commissioners Court report of all area schools and was known as Trail Creek School.
- 1883 First doctor—W.H. Pennington
- 1886 First train arrived in Justin: Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe
- 1887 January 25, 1887 Thomas J. Wheeler postmaster of Justine
 May 2 1887 John W. Berry postmaster of Justine
 October 4 1887 John W. Berry Postmaster of Justin
- 1887 Justin town plat June 7, 1887 by William B. Riley, L.S. Helm, Thomas H. B. Helm.
 Public sale of town lots in Justin Texas - Helm, Riley & Helm Proprietors
- 1896 May 15 - tornado
- 1902 Justin incorporated for free-school purposes, based on an election on August 2, 1902
- 1934 Deputy Sheriff "Red" Garrett was killed.
- 1946 Nov 7 Justin incorporated as City. W. I. Bishop was first Mayor.
- 2008 Mural painted

IV. DOCUMENTATION

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- ²⁷ www.texassantafehistory.com.
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- ³⁰ "Alphabetical List of the Ancestors and Descendants of President Rutherford and Lucy Webb," Hayes Presidential Center (http://www.rbhayes.org/hayes/genefiles/hayes_fgs/b139.htm), site maintained by head librarian, Fremont Ohio.
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