



# Making History in the Prairie

Grand Prairie Historical Organization

GPHO Volume X

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## Next Meeting

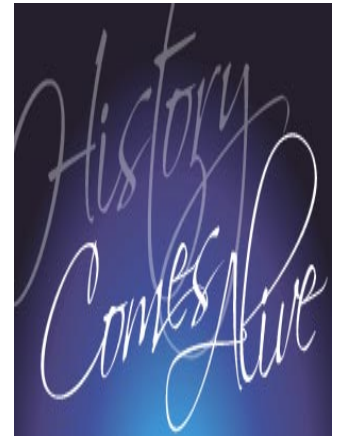
*The next meeting of the GP Historical Organization is **November 15, 11:30** at the **The Ruthe Jackson Center.***

Our Speaker for the meeting will be

### **Marshall H. Warder, Jr.—Reviving the Uptown**

Mr. Warder is a 1971 Graduate of Grand Prairie High School, lifelong resident, and a Texas Tech graduate in Architecture and Civil Engineering. After 25 years with Smith Warder Architects, Mr. Warder is now the Building Projects Manager for the city of Grand Prairie.

Mr. Warder will be speaking on the future of the Uptown Theater. Hosting Various functions, the Uptown will be the catalyst for future downtown GP development.



"A successful person is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks that others throw at him."

Sidney Greenberg

## **The Bryan Family in Grand Prairie**

Busy as she was in December 1947 trying to get her family settled into their new home, the children transferred into their new schools, and supporting her husband in his barely year-old business, Ester Bryan likely gave no thought to the fact that her family had been in Grand Prairie 45 years earlier. Of course, she was not with them since she was not born until four years later. But her family was still moving about Texas, trying to find permanent income and a permanent home after their migration from Alabama at the turn of the twentieth century – a migration that finally ended in Mesquite.

Her husband, Louis Bryan, also came to Mesquite on his own migration from his birth home in Lexington, Texas and met and married Ester there. But he had spent most of the past year in Grand Prairie developing his new business, Bryan and Jones Sand and Gravel, with his new partner, Ester's nephew, Gilbert Jones. Now that it was clear that the business would be permanent, the entire family had moved to Florence Hill and set about to be part of the Grand Prairie community.

But they were not living just with strangers. Gilbert Jones, his wife, Amy, and their four children had been in Grand Prairie since Gilbert returned from World War II. And half-way between the Bryans' new home and Florence Hill School lived Jeremiah Price, Ester's uncle who had also made the pilgrimage from Alabama fifty years earlier. "Uncle Jerry Price" was by this time widely known as the chief educator and mentor for the Masonic community in Grand Prairie.

When Ester's family, Joe and Velma Price and two children had been here earlier, Grand Prairie's few hundred citizens were living through the exciting growth of its new incorporation, the establishment of its own school district, connection to Dallas via the new Interurban, and connection "to the world" as a regular stop on the Texas and Pacific Railroad. When Louis and Ester arrived in 1947, Grand Prairie and the rest of what would come to be known as The Metroplex, was in the midst of a post-World War II boom of population and business.

It was that growth which invited and provided for the success of

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If you have any information you can share with us on any of the old Movie Theaters in Grand Prairie, please let me know. With the renovation of the Uptown, we would like to do a future program on all the Theaters: Aero Drome, Wings, Uptown, Texas, Downs Drive-In (later the Century Drive-In).

If you have any pictures to share of these theaters, please let me know. If you have pictures we'll make a copy and you keep the original. Brian Bingham 214-808-1913

**Bryan's in Grand Prairie—Continued from page 1**

Louis' new sand and gravel company and its subsequent manifestations.

In the next twenty years, Louis' business expanded from a direct mining of gravel for roads and concrete use to include a plant to wash and grade gravel and Red-D-Go Concrete, a ready-mix concrete division. The sites for these divisions moved as gravel pits north of Grand Prairie were depleted so that the company with 45 employees when Louis sold it in the late '60's, was primarily located in Hurst. Through most of those years Ester served as the company bookkeeper as well as, during the first part of the time, managing the food service for the elementary school in Florence Hill.

The success of the business was not just circumstantial, having to do with the growth of the Metroplex, but was primarily the result of Louis' hard physical labor, his skill of management, and a widely-regarded honesty in business and relationships. He brought those attributes with him when, after selling the business and retiring, he became a member of Grand Prairie's Planning and Zoning Commission and helped with its continuing growth. He gave full measure, directness, and honesty to all the tasks he undertook.

### **The Second Generation**

Meanwhile, Louis' and Ester's children made their own way in the Metroplex and many "elsewheres".

Don, the eldest, was married soon after the move to Grand Prairie. His career in engineering, sales, and management with EFCO (Economy Forms Corporation - which provides products and services to the construction industry for concrete support systems) took him from Dallas to Houston, back to Dallas (living in Grand Prairie) and finally to the home office in Des Moines, Iowa. As a Company Vice-President, Don's job required him to work throughout much of the south and west of the U.S. as well as Latin American and Asian Pacific countries. He is retired and still lives in Des Moines, which is his wife, Kathy's hometown.

J.C., the second son, graduated from Grand Prairie High School, Arlington State College (now UTA), and Texas A&M. After a brief stint in the army, during which time he met and married Nan Newsome and brought her to Texas from her native home in Georgia, he has lived in Grand Prairie his entire life. He developed a strong career in insurance, first as an agent with John Hancock and later as an independent insurance agent and counselor. Nan found her career with the Army & Air Force Exchange Service Federal Credit Union from which she retired as a Vice-President.

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## **Life Members of the Grand Prairie Historical Organization**

Judy Armstrong, Billy Joe Armstrong, Carol Bell, Grant Bell, Brian W. Bingham, L.R. Cannon, Ouida Chapman Lewis, Lisa Chennault Brown, Helen Chennault, Thomas Chennault, Thomas B Chennault, Jorja Jackson Clemson, City of Grand Prairie Marketing, Marge Copeland, H. Victor Copeland, Jerry Corley, Cheryl Friman Dover, Charles and Janice England, Olive Galloway, Norma Hale, Marvin J (Jack) Hays, Lee D. Herring, Thomas Hight, , Ruthe Thompson Jackson, Marie Kerr Stufflebeme, Blythe Kizziar, Duane McGuffey, Lynn Motley, Betty Phillips, Charles Powers, Bob Roberts, Susan Shuffler, Fynlon and Eugenia Simpson, Ouida Daughtery Smith, Amy Sprinkles, Angela Sutton Giessner, Donald Taylor, Kim Thorne , Laura Thompson Potter, Paul and Madie Vernon

Along with his recognition by the insurance industry (which gave him national awards and elected him to the Dallas Hall of Fame), J.C. has served the community as the campaign chair for 12 political campaigns, Precinct Chair and Election Judge for 16 years, president of the GPHS Alumni Association, an Elder in First Presbyterian Church, a member for 35 years of the DalCliff-Wynnwood Lion's Club, and a 20 year member of the board for the Way Back House. He is the only family member from the 1947 move from Mesquite who still lives in Grand Prairie.

Wayne (the Rev. Dr. L. Wayne Bryan), the third son, has been the most peripatetic of the family. After graduation from Grand Prairie High and Trinity University in San Antonio, he moved to San Francisco to attend seminary. His career as a pastor, campus minister, media producer, director of a state council of churches, and director of international visitors and peacemaking programs has taken him east, west, north, and south. This has meant actually living in seven states (in Texas three times).

His wife, Mary E. (Mimi) Parrott was a university administrator at the University of South Carolina and the University of Texas at Austin. Since their last jobs were in South Carolina, Mimi's home state, they still live there in their retirement.

Jeannine, the only daughter in the family, was the third family member to graduate from GPHS where she had been in the Gopher band (and was its 1955 sweetheart) and was a strong participant in 4-H, honored with study trips to A & M (her participation noted in a letter of congratulations from President Johnson). She established Jeannine's Shoppe, a specialty store for women in downtown Grand Prairie before she went into the corporate world. She became the Corporate Human Resources Manager (making her the first female manager) for Qualitron Aero (a division of Tenneco) and later the first female manager of Virginia Chemicals (a division of Celanese). She was active in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Study Club and Grand Prairie Women's Club.

Her husband, James (Jake) Johnson, a native of Arkansas, spent most of his career at Vought, Inc. where he became a Director. There he was part of the production of the B2 Stealth Bomber, the 747, 757 and 767 airliners as well as many other military and corporate airplanes. In their retirement, Jeannine and Jake live at Holly Lake Ranch in East Texas.

### **The Third Generation**

Louis' and Ester's grandchildren have not

only "gone out on their own", but they have done it all over the map.

Sandy Collins and her son live in Arlington and she works for a brokerage firm in Dallas. Don, Jr. and his family are in Iowa where he works in the construction industry. Sara Bryan lives in Olympia, WA with her husband and son. Austin Bryan owns a computer programming company in Colorado Springs where he lives with his wife. Andrew Bryan lived in Melbourne, Australia before his death in 2000.

Bryan Florentin is a Senior Lecturer in the Art Department at UTA in Arlington. Cynthia Hamala is a licensed Drug and Alcohol Counselor in Burlington, Wisconsin. Alan Bryan owns a computer programming company working for the insurance industry in Dallas where he lives with his wife (the former Swanee Burroughs of Dallas). Ben Bryan was a Dallas fireman before his death in 2001. His wife (the former Marsha Hulse of Grand Prairie) and their children still live in Cedar Hill where Marsha is a public school teacher.

Only Doug Bryan still lives in Grand Prairie – as is very well known to each year's high school seniors in the mid-cities. Since he opened Douglas Bryan Photography in 1989, he has been making "classy" senior and activities pictures. He has been president of GP Metro Rotary Club and provided leadership in much of GP's business and professional community. Doug and his wife, Sue (from Fort Worth) along with their two girls find much of their life in First Presbyterian Church.

### **The Church**

For the past 60 years, one has been unable to be in First Presbyterian Church of Grand Prairie without bumping into the Bryans and/or their handiwork. The entire family joined the church soon after their move from Mesquite. The three younger children all became extremely active in youth and music activities (Don soon moved to Dallas and was in a church there). This was where Wayne preached his first sermon, thanks to the invitation of the pastor, Rev. Newton Benton. The third and fourth generations who remained in the city grew up in First Presbyterian. It was the site of baptisms, weddings, and the funerals for Louis and Ester.

Over the years, Don, J.C., and Doug all became elders in the church, serving on the Session (the governing body). Jeannine and Jake were Deacons. J.C., Nan, and Ben were regulars in the choir



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and other music activities. Almost everybody has been teachers, youth advisors, and leaders in men's and women's activities. And there have been few (if any) service and mission projects without members of the family in participation and leadership.

**The Heritage from Which They Come**

It is not just the generations of this family in the twentieth century which have been travelers and immigrants. Some other notable members of the family have also traveled a bit and ended up in Texas.

**Moses Austin** (Louis' 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather) moved from Connecticut to Virginia to Missouri and finally made a special trip to San Antonio, where he arrived on December 23, 1820, seeking permission to bring colonists to Texas, a mission fulfilled after his death by his son **Stephen F. Austin** (Louis' 2<sup>nd</sup> great granduncle).

**Moses Austin Bryan** (Louis' great grandfather), born in Missouri and moved to Texas, is frozen in time in the famous painting in the Texas state capitol recounting the surrender of the Mexican army at San Jacinto, an episode in which his role was interpreter for the conference between Sam Houston and Antonio López de Santa Anna on March 22, 1836

**Hugh Wilson** (Louis' 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandfather) was a Presbyte-

rian minister born in North Carolina who, after service in Mississippi and Tennessee, came to Texas and, on June 2, 1838, organized Bethel Presbyterian Church, four miles west of San Augustine as the first Presbyterian church in Texas.

So, the Bryans of Grand Prairie are "regular Americans", children of immigrants (from England, Scotland, Wales, and France) who, as have their ancestors, contribute to their communities and make the world a better place for us all to live..

**The Bryan Family**

Left to Right; JC, Donald, Jeannine, and Wayne Bryan. The Buick is a 1941 and this picture was taken in 1946 in Mesquite. The Mesquite Football Stadium now stands in place of this house (Rt 2, Mesquite, Tx)



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