

OAKWOOD CEMETERY

DENTON, TEXAS

When the county seat was moved to its present location in 1857, the new town of Denton required a cemetery easier to reach than the old one at Alton. Increasing numbers of settlers were building homes near the townsite, and merchants who had formerly operated businesses at New Alton were transferring their goods to building around the square. (1) A burial ground for the rapidly growing town was a necessity.

Hiram Cisco, who had earlier donated forty acres of his land as a part of the original one hundred acres used for the townsite, now offered another acre only 1/4 mile off the southeast corner of the square. The land was a flat pasture covered with a large grove of oak trees. (2) When the property was transferred, the town agreed to its upkeep and named it "City Cemetery." The first grave was for a Mrs. Wilson, who passing through Denton in a covered wagon had died in childbirth. The newborn infant, a daughter died a few days later and was buried beside her mother. (3) Their graves were marked simply with large sandstone slabs laid upright at an angle to resemble roof tops. There are no inscriptions, but the gravestones are still here, the child's having fallen.

In subsequent years many of Denton's early settlers were buried in City Cemetery, among them Jesse M. Blount and his wife Sophie, who came to Denton from Mississippi in 1857, arriving with their children and slaves in an oxen wagon. Blount helped to lay out the new county seat and bought one of the lots on the west side of the square, where he and Dr. J. M. McIlheny owned a mercantile building which burned in the fire of 1860. Shortly after his

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FOOTNOTES

- (1) C. A. Bridges, History of Denton, Texas, (Waco, 1978), : pages 72-76.
- (2) Edmond F. Bates, History and Reminiscences of Denton County, (Denton, 1918), page 315 .
- (3) Bates, page 318, and Lorena Bates Smith, the historian's daughter. Invaluable details from Mrs. Smith concerning other graves in Oakwood Cemetery have been collected by Yvonne Jenkins and are now in the archives of the Denton County Historical Commission.
- (4) Captain B. B. Paddock, ed., History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest, (Chicago, 1922), IV, pages 681-82.
- (5) Bates, page 317.
- (6) Denton Monitor, January, 1891. Reference in Jenkins' notes from Mrs. Smith.
- (7) Both Bates and Bridges list many others buried here whose markers have disappeared or were never made.
- (8) Bridges, page 166.
- (9) Bates, page 149.
- (10) Bates, page 315.
- (11) Bates, page 315.
- (12) Bridges, page 389.
- (13) Thelma Stevens, curator of Denton County Courthouse on the Square Museum.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

Bates, Edmond F., History and Reminiscences of Denton County, Denton: McNitzky Printing Company, 1918. Reprinted, Terrill Wheeler Printing, Inc., 1976.

Bridges, C. A., History of Denton, Texas, Waco: Texian Press, 1978.

Jenkins, Yvonne A., "Oakwood Cemetery". Denton, 1981. Typewritten notes on file in the Denton County Historical Commission Archives.

Paddock, Captain B. B., ed., History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest. Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1922.

Criteria to be used in Historical Landmark Designation

The petitioner will be responsible for furnishing data to the Planning and Community Development Department for submittal to the Landmark Commission substantiating that the property meets at least one or more of the following 13 criteria for Historic Landmark designation:

- 1. Character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Denton, State of Texas, or the United States.
- * 2. Recognition as a recorded Texas historic landmark, a national landmark, or entered into the National Register of Historic Places. * Pending THC Marker
- 3. Embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.
- 4. Identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the city.
- 5. Embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation.
- 6. Relationship to other distinctive buildings, sites or areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on architectural, historic or cultural motif.
- 7. Portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an area of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.
- 8. Archaeological value in that it has produced or can be expected to produce data affecting theories of historic or prehistoric interest.
- 9. Exemplification of the cultural, economic, social, ethnic or historical heritage of the City, State or United States.
- 10. Location as the site of a significant historic event.
- 11. Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City, State or United States.
- 12. A building or structure that because of its location has become of value to a neighborhood, community area, or the city.
- 13. Value as an aspect of community sentiment or public pride.