

THE PIONEER TRAIL

Please respect the sites that are not open to the public and view them from the street.

NR: National Register
THM: Texas Historical Marker
RTHL: Registered Texas Historic Landmark
AHL: Arlington Historic Landmark

As you drive this route, try to visualize the places on the "trail" before they were part of Arlington. Remnants of the Eastern Cross Timbers oak forest, stream valleys with their characteristic willows, pecans, and cottonwoods, and the rolling land all give glimpses of the physical setting in which the following events and places developed.

A. Johnson Plantation Cemetery/ Arlington's Early African American Cemetery THM **600 block of W. Arkansas, east of Matlock**

In this small historic family cemetery lie the remains of one of the principal figures in the history of Arlington and Tarrant County, together with those of his family, his slaves and their family members. Colonel Middleton Tate Johnson was a member of the Congress of the Texas Republic, namesake of Johnson County, and known as the "Father of Tarrant County." He arrived in this area in 1846, as commander of a company of Texas Rangers. Research is being conducted to discover the unmarked African American graves in this cemetery. **Tours can be arranged through the Arlington Historical Society, 817-460-4001. Now, cross the street to Founders Park.**

B. Marrow Bone Spring NR, THM **In Founders Park, 600 block W. Arkansas**

On the west side of the bridge, follow the park trail south from Arkansas toward Vandergriff Park. The historical marker is at the spring's location on Johnson Creek, which parallels the trail. The area around the spring had long been a gathering place for Indians. In January 1848, Colonel Middleton Tate Johnson's Company of the Texas Rangers was assigned to Kaufman Station in the area of the spring. The post was later called Marrow Bone Spring Post. The spring is still active though it cannot be separated from Johnson Creek, which the trail follows from Founders Park to Vandergriff Park. Johnson Station, as it is known, became one of the county's earliest settlements and Johnson became a major landowner in the area. A post office operated here from 1851 to 1905. **Proceed west from the parking lot to Matlock. Turn left and then right on W. Mayfield. The marker and cemetery are on the right.**

C. The Johnson Station Cemetery THM **1100 block of W. Mayfield.**

Just east of the cemetery, on the north side of the street, a DAR granite monument marks the location of the first stagecoach inn serving as an overnight stop between Fort Worth and Dallas. Service of the Trunk Stage Coach Line started in 1845 and connected with major stage routes such as the Butterfield Trail. **If you want to stop at the cemetery, you can turn right at Cooper St. and then turn right at the cemetery sign.** Some of the area's original land grantees are buried here, including members of the Jopling, Melear and Matlock families. The Jopling-Melear cabin

is located in Knapp Heritage Park on Front St. in downtown Arlington. Following Mayfield west, proceed to Fielder. Turn right (north) to California. Turn left and proceed toward Bowen Rd. Woods Chapel is on the corner.

D. Woods Chapel Baptist Church THM 2424 California

In April 1901, Rev. Washington Lafayette Woods and a group of met in a brush arbor to form the congregation of this historic church. They built a small, white frame chapel in Nov. of that year and named it for the pastor. Worship services were held on Saturday and Sunday until 1910 and baptisms were conducted in nearby Rush and Village creeks. One of the villages that became part of Arlington was established around this church. Turn right on Bowen going north and proceed to Pioneer Pkwy (Spur 303). Turn left on Pioneer Pkwy and go 2.3 miles to a granite marker on the right, noting events occurring in 1841.

E. General Edward H. Tarrant Marker THM 6000 block of Pioneer

A granite monument, just west of the Village Creek Bridge, marks one of the last Indian fought in Tarrant County. On May 24, 1841, General Edward H. Tarrant of the Republic of Texas Militia led a company of volunteers in the attack upon the villages of the Caddo Tribe residing along Village Creek. A historical marker (THM) on the seventh tee of the Lake Arlington Golf Course, south of this location, marks the initial charge made on the largest village, which was where the clubhouse now stands. After this battle, many of the tribes began moving west. Proceed east on Pioneer Pkwy to Green Oaks. Turn left on Green Oaks, which becomes Dottie Lynn Pkwy. Turn right into Village Creek Historical Park.

F. Village Creek Historical Park and Caddoan Villages 2605 Dottie Lynn

Archeological excavations along the Village Creek valley have unearthed evidence of several prehistoric villages. Artifacts from the area date back almost 9,000 years and represent a culture of food-gatherers and hunters. Spanish explorers were believed to have made camp near here in 1542 at an Indian Village named Guasco. In the 1830s, the valley held one of the largest concentrations of Indians in the region. Village Creek was so named because of all the Indian villages along its banks. Monuments in the park and along the trail that follows the creek north provide additional information on the Indians and the battle of Village Creek. Go north on Dottie Lynn, which becomes Eastchase Pkwy and turn right onto Meadowbrook Blvd., which becomes Green Oaks again. Look for a stone monument on the west side of the street in the 2300 block of Green Oaks.

G. Captain John Denton Ambush Site 2300 hundred block of Green Oaks, north of Lamar

Following brief skirmishes at several encampments in the Battle of Village Creek, two scouting patrols were attacked near the mouth of the creek and retreated to the main camp. Over the objections of more experienced Rangers, the leader of one scouting party, Captain John B. Denton, pursued further north into the Village Creek thickets. He was ambushed and killed, along with 12 Indians. Captain Denton was the only white man killed in the battle. He was a circuit-riding minister, a lawyer and the namesake of Denton County. The stone monument near

the sidewalk marks this event. Continue north on Green Oaks and turn right on Davis. Turn right at Tomlin and proceed to the Tomlin Cemetery located at the end of the street.

H. Tomlin Cemetery THM

1300 Block of Tomlin

The Wilkinsons, a pioneer family whose graves are marked by clusters of rock, were the first interred in this cemetery in 1870. But the oldest gravestone is that of Solomon Tomlin, a horseman and farmer who migrated to Texas with his family in the 1860s. He died in 1894. His son, James "Buck" Tomlin (1852-1934), a noted breeder of fine race horses, bought the cemetery property in 1888. Proceed back east on Tomlin across Davis into the parking lot. Gibbins Cemetery is on the right. A list of Gibbins family members buried here is on the back of the monument.

I. Gibbins Cemetery and Homestead Site THM

2200 Block of N. Davis

In 1860, James Gibbins and his family migrated to what is now north Arlington. James and his son, T. J., owned and farmed more than 1300 acres in this location. James donated land for the Harrison School about a mile south of here. After his death in 1891, T. J.'s widow, Martha, maintained the family's property for more than three decades. Descendants of the family donated more than 200 acres to the city of Arlington for what became River Legacy Parks. The earliest grave in the cemetery is that of Amanda Gibbins, 1877. Proceed north on Davis and turn east on Green Oaks to N. Collins. Drive north on Collins to River Legacy Parks on the left. View the markers, which are on the trail about 200 feet east of the pedestrian bridge.

J. Bird's Fort and Sloan-Journey Expedition Markers THM

3000 block of N. Collins

As you drive on N. Collins, you are crossing the Trinity River "bottoms." This is the site of some of the earliest exploration by settlers, the Sloan-Journey Expedition, and the earliest settlement in Tarrant County, Bird's Fort. Arlington's landfill, gravel mining and other excavations have changed the land, but the trees along the river give an impression of what the valley looked like in the 1830s and 1840s. Captain Jonathan Bird established Bird's Fort in 1841, about a mile east of Collins. Its life was short and no evidence of the fort remains, but it was the site of the 1843 execution of "A Treaty of Peace and Friendship" between several Indian tribes and the Republic of Texas. The treaty was later ratified by Republic President Sam Houston. Continue south on Collins to Lamar. Turn left and go under SH360 to the Watson Cemetery on the right.

K. Watson Cemetery THL

Patrick A. Watson established an early community here. The first person buried in the cemetery, in 1846, was a woman whose coffin was made from a wagon bed. Brush was burned atop her grave to hide it from Indians. When Watson bought the land in 1853, he set aside a one-acre cemetery and gave land for the Watson Community's first school and church. In 1956, the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike was routed around the cemetery and the church was relocated. The Watson Cabin is now on display in Knapp Heritage Park in downtown Arlington. Before SH360 was built, the route was known as Watson Road, and signs to this effect remain.

This concludes the Pioneer Trail Tour. If you would like to continue the Tour of Historic

Buildings, drive south on the SH360 service road and turn right on Six Flags Drive. Click next to the Tour of Historic Buildings.

SOURCES & CREDITS

The City of Arlington Neighborhood Services Department and the Landmark Preservation Commission produced the content of this web site.

Thanks go to Dr. Richard Ferrier at the School of Architecture, University of Texas at Arlington, for his assistance in obtaining the participation of volunteer student Jan "Skip" Dawson; O. K. Carter, Fort Worth Star-Telegram (Arlington Edition), for his introductory comments; Sarah Barr, City of Arlington Design Communication Coordinator; George Moreno of Arlington Baptist College for assistance in computer layout design and photography; Landmark Preservation Commission members Martha Martin and Dorothy Rencurrel; and Special Collections, UTA Libraries for historical photographs from the Dunlop collection; and the Arlington Star-Telegram for Time Frames, "Mineral Well, (1892-1951)," 11-14-04.

Text sources include, among others, Arlington, Texas Birthplace of the Metroplex by Arista Joyner; Arlington Historic Resources Survey by Hardy-Heck-Moore, Inc.; Transitions: A Centennial History of The University of Texas at Arlington 1895-1995 by Gerald D. Saxon; the Star-Telegram (Arlington Edition) Outlook and Time Frames series; and Arlington-A Pictorial History by René Harris and Arista Joyner.

This project was funded in part by a CLG grant from the Texas Historical Commission and the City of Arlington.

Inquiries regarding landmark preservation designation and historic preservation should be made to the City of Arlington Neighborhood Services Department at 817-459-6777.

Many of the individual historical markers in Arlington are listed in this web site. For a complete listing with descriptive information, visit www.ci.arlington.tx.us/landmark and click on historic properties.

Sites and structures were selected for inclusion on the web site by the Landmark Preservation Commission, based on their historical significance to the city. No other endorsement or warrantee is made or implied.