



# FRANKLIN COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Volume 25, Number 1, January/February 2020

Website: <https://www.fchatx.com>

**Date: Monday, January 6, 2020 - Pot Luck Meal**

**Time: 6:00 p.m.**

**Program:**

Jim Gatewood, History Professor and Author; **“Bonnie & Clyde and Their Baby Daughter”**

**Location: Masonic Lodge, Mt. Vernon**

**Hosts:**

Jim and Christine Ballard, Nathan and Lillie Reves, Randy Cates, Beverly McPherson

Jim Gatewood is a Dallas history professor at Richland College. The best-selling author has published over 90 books and manuscripts with over 20 books in print.

Professor Gatewood’s father was a Chicago stock broker. Jim Gatewood was born eleven days before the October 1929 market crash. The family moved to Dallas with their new baby settled in a laundry basket in the back seat of a 1929 Hudson. He has spent his entire life in Dallas. He engages his listeners, carrying them back in time to long-forgotten places and revealing the secrets hidden away in the dusty attics of time.

Jim became a recognized Dallas historian and served on the Dallas County Assassination Review Board for over a decade as the city’s own team reviewed the various theories and the factual circumstances regarding the Kennedy Assassination. In that capacity and through independent research, Jim Gatewood rediscovered much of the forgotten history of Dallas’ most prominent figures who have left their mark on America’s History.

Among the many books written about notable figures of Dallas, you will meet:

Benny Binion, Dallas Gambler and Mob Boss; Sheriff Bill Decker, a Texas legend. And Harry Weatherford, the best rifle shot in Sheriff Decker’s cadre, who was placed on top of the County Records Building to protect the motorcade and how he saved Jacqueline Kennedy’s life by firing at Lee Harvey Oswald, causing Oswald’s third shot to go high, missing the motorcade and striking the curb on Elm Street; J. Frank Norris – running the Top O’ the Hill Casino for the benefit of wealthy men tied in with Texas Oil; The Ku Klux Klan’s stronghold over Dallas; Slats Rodgers and the Love Field Lunatics.

And stories of Bonnie and Clyde and their reign of terror with robberies far and wide. And our specific evening, January 6, with Jim Gatewood telling us about Bonnie Parker’s Baby Daughter.

Join us for good food and fellowship and an interesting program. Bring friends and family. Dr. Gatewood will have the Bonnie & Clyde book available for sale after the program - \$20.00



## Prairie Chickens

By: Matt White

As the days grow shorter, and the onset of autumn hastens the approach of another Indian summer, it follows that soon the leaves will be changing colors before disappearing from the trees. Fall has always been a season for reflection, for looking backward to earlier times that can never be reclaimed. It is perhaps fitting then that in this season I share what is perhaps one of the most provocative early accounts of the natural world in northeast Texas that I have ever seen. It is also a tale about a bird that has vanished from our area.



In *Journal of an Indian Trader: Anthony Glass and the Texas Trading Frontier; 1790-1810*, edited by western historian and Louisiana native Dan L. Flores and published by Texas A&M University Press in 1985, we read what is probably the earliest recorded Anglo account from what is now Franklin County. The words are those of Anthony Glass – a frontiersman who in the summer of 1808 defied Spanish authorities to trade for horses and buffalo hides with the Wichita Indians on the Red River.

Glass' journey took him northwestward from Natchitoches, Louisiana, along well-established Caddo roads to the prairies paralleling the southern bluffs of the Sulphur River. From here he headed in a more westerly direction, crossing White Oak Creek near what is today the small community of Daphne. On July 27 of that year, he writes that he "Made 23 miles WNW" through the prairie.

What is interesting to me, however, is what he relayed next (in his exact language). "All this day we passed small mounds innumerable. Elevated five or six feet they are generally 15 or 20 feet in diameter and rising perpendicularly." So much of what these early pioneers encountered has disappeared, yet at Daphne these ancient, mysterious mounds (known as mima mounds by scientists) remain exactly as they were encountered almost two centuries ago on the prairies maintained by the Hughes and Hicks families of Franklin County.

Birds often figure prominently in pioneer journals and this one is no exception. Upon reaching these mounded prairies Glass had his first encounter of the trip with a bird now called the Greater Prairie Chicken. These birds were once extremely common in the grasslands of northeastern Texas but within a century of their exposure to Anglo settlement, they were wiped out. Notice how Glass describes them: "We saw this day great numbers of Prairie Hens...killed several..."

Brown and white, and about the size of their domestic namesake (though they are not as closely related as might be expected), they possess bizarre yellow sacks on the sides of their necks that can be repeatedly inflated. This creates a sound similar to that produced by blowing over the top of a jug and is part of a performance the males use to attract females. These performances, in which the males dance or strut in a circular manner, take place on the highest knolls, which are called leks. Because Daphne's mounds are thought to be some of the tallest in North America they would have provided excellent platforms for the male prairie chickens to dance. Favored leks were used year after year until the last birds were shot and the sound of the low haunting calls, which can travel well over a mile, vanished forever. What remain are the mounds – the forgotten stages where generations of chickens danced. It was a strange dance, but one that apparently much impressed in the Indians who witnessed it, because they are thought to have mimicked the chicken dances themselves.

## Greater Roadrunner

By: Matt White

I didn't start watching birds until my college days, but, like most kids who grow up in the country, I was already aware of more than just a handful of them. When I got my first bird field guide, though, I was surprised to learn that the large blue-gray birds that fished beside our pool were actually Great Blue Herons – not cranes; and that the loud night birds that called in our woods were in fact Chuck-will's Widows, and not Whip-poor-wills. The latter, I soon discovered was actually a similar species that nested in the mountains of Arkansas and Oklahoma, but not in post oak and piney woods of northeast Texas. Although the red birds that I had seen outside our window since my toddler days were, in fact, Northern Cardinals, the funny looking birds that I had seen running down the lane heading out into the pasture were indeed Greater Roadrunners, though, of course, I had always called them just roadrunners.

In some parts of Texas, though, they are nicknamed chaparrals, in reference to the shrubby thickets where they reside – though as a child I had never heard that name, or paisano either, another alias. Roadrunners are found in the southwestern United States from California east to Arkansas and Louisiana and have expanded eastward during the last century and a half as openings were cleared in the woods. They build their nests in thickets and brushy fencerows but are often seen running right down the middle of a country road, hence their name. These large members of the cuckoo family mate for life and are quite beneficial to have around because they eat snakes and similar fare – such as lizards, insects and scorpions.

When I was a kid, there was a dense dewberry thicket behind our barn that had grown up through an old pile of discarded lumber. Despite its unsightly appearance, the thorny tangles provided the birds a welcome safe haven from predators. When we walked that way one of them would run on ahead of us, or perhaps dart for cover. Although I knew little about them at the time, this was my first introduction to these curious birds. Later my dad decided that the brush pile had to go – and so did the birds.

To this day the roadrunner remains one of my favorite birds. I never tire of watching one sitting on the side of the road pumping its tail and raising its conspicuous crest, or darting suddenly into the brush as I approach. Roadrunners spend a great deal of time on the ground, and fly only short distances. Only once have I seen them fly more than about three or four feet high and that was a bird that gained the amazing altitude of ten or fifteen feet so that it could cross a busy farm-to-market road.



Roadrunners are uncommon in northeast Texas and being shy by nature, they are often not easy to find. I usually stumble upon them by accident while driving along some dirt road in the country. They seem more active on warm sunny days – and not surprisingly, for a bird of the desert southwest, they do not take a siesta during the hottest parts of the afternoon like many other birds. They are disappearing from roadsides and fences where every bit of brush has been scraped clean by a bulldozer – a situation that I hope does not lead to their eventual disappearance from our region.

## THE BANKHEAD HIGHWAY ACROSS NORTHEAST TEXAS

By Hudson Old

(Reprinted from *The East Texas Journal*)

Time was, The Broadway of America stretched from sea to shining sea, the first paved highway connecting every town square along the 850-mile drive across Texas to the Pacific Coast at San Diego and the Atlantic within an easy drive from Washington, D.C. Long stretches of semi-sleepy U.S. 67 today follow the old road through Northeast Texas from Texarkana to Sulphur Springs. A 1940's photo of traffic along Mt. Pleasant's Jefferson Street is featured in the opening fold of the first state brochure of Texas Historic Highways - The Bankhead Highway, The Broadway of America.

The highway work started with President Woodrow Wilson's 1916 signing of the "Federal Aid Road Act" written by Senator Hollis Bankhead of Alabama (that's right; he's the grandfather of the actress Talullah Bankhead - in sultry nightclub scenes of the 1930's).

The Bankhead Highway wasn't a straight shot across America. Its dip from Washington into the Old South is directly linked to the Alabama residence of the enabling legislation's author. Its routes were fluid in early days, when towns competed to make the map. In those years the road split at Texarkana along rivaling ways, one generally following present U.S. 67, the other turning south and angling east to Hughes Springs, following present-day Texas 11 through Daingerfield and Pittsburg. It came together again at Sulphur Springs.

In terms of historic significance, the Bankhead's bigger than Route 66. The road knew Pierce-Arrows, Packards, Grahams, Kaisers, Tuckers and Hudsons, or any of a host of American car manufacturers who've gone the way of the Studebaker.

Bankhead historian Dan Smith's book, *Texas Highway 1, The Bankhead*, describes a turn-of-the 20th century "Good Roads" movement that led to federal funding of a national highway system. "It's a forgotten story, but the stuff every Texas school kid should know," says Professor Dale Truitt, retired industrial arts instructor at A&M Commerce. "The Bankhead embodies what everyone should understand about the relationship between roads and economic development."

The Texas Historic Commission (THC) has identified 2,700 historic "cultural resources" ranging from architectural styles of motels and gas stations that were the direct result of the highway to secondary impacts including the rise of billboards. And that's just across our region of Texas. As reflected by THC designated resources along the way, the road leads through a visual story spanning 50 years, pre-dating the rise of the nation's interstate system.

"The Bull Durham tobacco sign on the south side of Mt. Pleasant's 1894 Caldwell-Carr building was part of America's first outdoor advertising campaign," Professor Truitt said. And think of the cars that traveled Mt. Vernon's Main Street with the buildings and square looking about the same now as they did when those first vehicles came through after the road opened in 1919 (following funding approved in 1916). The livery stable for Mt. Vernon still operated where the Alliance Bank now maintains a parking lot to the west of the downtown bank. In fact, that livery stable held on for another decade and even went through an incarnation as a beer hall for a short period after National Prohibition was ended.

Billboards along roadways followed.

Donna McFarland says that the road is bigger than the individual tourism assets of towns along the route. "The bigger idea is the collective draw of all the assets in every town along the route" said Mrs. McFarland, current President of the Mt. Vernon Chamber. The key to the marketing initiative is branding

the Bankhead Highway name into towns along the route so that all are promoting a common tourism theme, Mrs. McFarland said.

The Bankhead refined Texas government. “When the funding act passed, one of the requirements for getting federal money was having a state highway department,” Professor Truitt said. Austin got the message and in 1917 created the Texas Highway Department (now TxDOT) with a mandate to “get the farmers out of the mud.”

Franklin County routes reaching back to the days of wagon roads became a part of a state route designated as Texas 1 that became a designated leg of the Bankhead after a military surveying convoy worked its way across Texas in 1919. Coming west after crossing the town square at Mt. Vernon, the route passed through Winfield bending south into Farmer’s Academy following what’s now Farm Road 899. Merging into modern-day Ferguson Road at Mt. Pleasant, the route veers onto West 1st at O’Tyson, coming east along the south side of the courthouse. Turning north on Jefferson, the original route ran to 16th, turned east and followed what’s now a back road from town out to U.S. 67 east. Of course, prior to the creation of this now-famous highway, horses and buggies lined the square in downtown Mt. Vernon.

Donna McFarland says: “Drive the Bankhead through Mt. Vernon. Or better yet, ride a bike, or take a youngster for a walk around the town square in Mt. Vernon. Many of our current brick buildings were erected about 1880 and were here when those first automobiles drove through the town. And the horse rail remains in place around the entire downtown square. It’s a step back in time. That’s how we ended up with our entire downtown listed on the National Register of Historic Places. That square saw soldiers march off to War in 1861; and in 1898; and in 1917; and in 1941. It’s not only a historic tourism asset; it’s a living history lesson in our heritage for the people here. Come with new recognition and appreciation of this asset.”

Editor’s note: Before the Bankhead Route was dedicated, and before the 1919 convoy arrived to officially drive the route, we had some cars in Mt. Vernon. J.L. Rutherford is said to have had the first automobile in the town. It was delivered by rail. Mr. Rutherford (founder of the 1869 Drugstore on the square bearing his name) took possession of his 1915 roadster. By then he was about 65 years of age. He managed to get the vehicle cranked and he steered it to the town square. After about two circles, when he was ready to stop the vehicle and to show off the new contraption – he began to bellow “Whoa” – but the car kept going. Finally some Davenport or Stringer boys jumped in and managed to halt the vehicle for “Uncle Johnny” as he was fondly named. His brick home on West Main still stands. Uncle Johnny’s good friend Green Hughes turned his daughter-in-law loose in their new 1915 Brewster; she couldn’t stop it; ran directly into a gate; never drove again. Well, we did have rail passenger service from 1887 through 1958; maybe you could make it without that car.



Construction of the highway through Mt. Vernon in about 1916.

**Cherry Eagle Brand Icebox Pie**  
**By Dorothy Winfield**



- 1 can pie cherries, drained
- 1 carton Cool Whip
- 1 c. chopped pecans
- 1 can Eagle Brand Milk
- ¼ c. lemon juice
- Few drops red food coloring

Mix and pour into graham cracker pie crust. Refrigerate until serving time.

Dorothy Tucker Winfield (1931-2019) was the daughter of the Rev. Charles Andrew Tucker (1898-1983) and Annie Adele Fincher Tucker (1901-1985). Her father was a Presbyterian minister. Her parents retired to Mt. Vernon and both died here. Dorothy and her husband, Charles, moved to Mt. Vernon in 1973 from Celina; both were teachers and active with the Retired Teachers Association. They have two children: Alan and Margaret.

**Memorials & Honorariums**

Donated By:

Kay Frazier  
Dr. Emily Lucid  
Ernie Snapka

Donated By:

Jaime Bennett  
Helen R. Myers

In Memory Of:

Gene Frazier, C.T. Penny  
Dr. & Mrs. Henry Stanford  
Jack Cook

In Honor Of:

Daniel & Amber Hicks  
Gail Reed

**WE ♥ OUR  
MEMBERS**

**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP NOW**

## THE TIGER MITES

### The Scene

It was September 1953 and we wanna-be Mt Vernon high school football players were sitting or standing around under the several large post-oak trees that shaded the small wood frame building, with inside walls of bare-wood planking, that served as the club field house and dressing room. This building included a small walled off section for the visiting team players. Player lockers consisted of wood benches along the walls with large nails driven in to the wall planking on which the player hung his uniform, gear and street clothes. But, the building did have a concrete floor with showers for both the home and visiting teams and actually were better facilities than some we saw as visitors at other towns during the season. The coaches stored extra equipment up in the partially floored "attic" area.

The squad that year consisted of 30 to 35 players with only a few of us freshmen. The high school in those days was unable to also support a junior varsity or B-team program. We freshmen were dressed in "left-over" uniforms after the upper-classmen players had been out-fitted that morning. Some of us even had to wear the old 1940's-vintage leather helmets, commonly worn by teams back then. And, only one or two of the squad's helmets, old or newer, had face masks.

As we had filed out of the field house that early morning, our first stop was in front of the local newspaper publisher who took our picture for the upcoming issue of the weekly paper. Then, the next stop was at the newspaper publisher's automobile where in the front passenger seat sat the publisher's pretty, blue-eyed, blond, middle daughter, with a clipboard who for each of us recorded our name, weight and high school classification.

### The Coaches

Eventually, the head and assistant coaches appeared from the field house doorway. Both coaches were previous graduates of the same high school with college careers interrupted with Navy service during World War II. But, after their military service, both had subsequently gone on to college with the head coach playing varsity basketball at East Texas State College (now Texas A&M University at Commerce) and the assistant coach playing varsity football and perhaps baseball at the University of Houston. The head coach was firey, intense and "whip-lash lanky", of medium height and very agile, who was dressed in a pair of old purple and white basketball warm-up pants, white sweat-shirt with sleeves cut off at the shoulder and an old well-worn purple baseball cap that may have been left over from the by then defunct Mount Vernon Lions semi-pro baseball days. The assistant coach was also firey, but well-read and very knowledgeable of football, who was short in stature, but was "well-knit", compact and athletic, very quick-footed and mobile with "burr-cut" sandy hair, dressed in gray baseball pants, white tee-shirt, and no cap. Both coaches wore steel-cleated baseball shoes.

### Workouts Begin

As the head coach blew loudly on a whistle he commanded ..... "let's go, let's be mighty mites"! So, the squad then hustled out onto the nearby practice field for a long lap around it, with many of us wondering just how we all of a sudden we were the "mighty mites", since our athletics teams had always been known as Tigers?

But, our attention was then promptly re-focused with the Assistant Coach sharply ordering us into formation for calisthenics, in 4 or 5 ranks with seniors on the front rank and us freshmen on the back row. The Assistant Coach then led the squad in 30 or more minutes of calisthenics himself that first morning as he would do for just about each workout session all season.

Calisthenics were then followed by various drills for blocking, tackling, handoffs, passing, etc., with the workout finally ending in a great many wind sprints. About the same routine was followed for workouts during the rest of the season, except that most of the evening and afternoon workouts included lengthy scrimmages before the concluding wind sprints.

On that first morning after wind sprints we were allowed to “cool off” kneeling and sitting under the large post oak trees in front of the field house during which the Head Coach handed out mimeographed playbooks and conducted a “chalk talk” of the offenses and defenses he expected the team to be using during the season. And, to emphasize various points he used chalk and a large wood-frame supported blackboard.

Basically, our team was to use the split-T offense, but with some use of the TCU spread offense. In this spread offense the ball was snapped back 4 to 5 yards to the quarterback (called a tailback in this position) who could run, pass or quick-kick; the ends were spread along the line of scrimmage out about 10 yards, and the fullback and halfbacks were stationed out in the slots between the tackles and ends. In some instances one of the backs would be stationed as a blocking back in front of and just to the side of the quarterback/tailback. In present days such spread offenses are commonly referred to as “shot-gun offenses”.

### Mighty Mite Revealed

But, just before the “chalk talk” ended that first morning the head coach explained to us just who the original “Mighty Mites” were. This was the name under which the 1930's Ft. Worth Masonic Orphans Home football team was known, a team that almost completely dominated high school football in Texas throughout those years. Year after year during both the regular season and the State playoffs, the Mighty Mites frequently defeated teams from the largest and better-equipped high schools in the State. This little group of orphans, despite usually having only just enough players to field the requisite eleven and scant equipment and facilities, and had to commute to games on an old flat-bed truck of hay, did this through a combination of inspiration, desire, skills acquired by frequent and hard practices, toughness and just plain guttiness. And, our head coach throughout the season would remind us that we needed to be like “those mighty mites”, that even though we had much better equipment and many more players to work with than the Mighty Mites had, we still did not have as much as many of the teams we would be playing, but could certainly make up the differences through inspiration and desire just like those Masonic orphans home teams of old did.

### The Regular Season

Mt Vernon began the season that year with handily winning over Clarksville, Atlanta, Paris Reserves (Junior Varsity) and Mineola.

The Mt Pleasant game was played at “Old Mt Pleasant Tiger Stadium” in Mt Pleasant with Mt Vernon narrowly coming out with a 6-0 win. On the Mt Pleasant team I remember there was a big tackle with the last name of “Traylor” who went on to play college ball for the Arkansas Razorbacks, and it was probably largely due to Traylor that Mt Vernon's split-T and spread offensive team was not able to score more. Another Mt Pleasant player, I remember was Roger Durant who played in the line as well as doing some of the place kicking. Still another Mt Pleasant player was running back, Billy Liles.

Then, after narrowly winning over Mt Pleasant, Mt Vernon had a more substantial win over Winnsboro the next week.

But then, the Pittsburg Pirates came to town with a gritty, well-drilled single-wing offense that included big, tough linemen and fast, talented and shifty backs. It was a dreary rainy night that was made even more foggy and disagreeable due to smoke from a pile of burning discarded railroad cross-ties on the railroad



right of way that passed along the south boundary of the stadium site. And, during the game even more smoke and noise were added by the passing of a long, slow freight train that included the rear brakeman sitting high in the caboose cupola blowing his whistle at the fans and the action on the field.

Mt Vernon scored first when early in the first quarter, the Tiger fullback took the ball off-tackle for a 45-yard touchdown. But, during the rest of the half the game got much tougher, with one of Mt Vernon's tackles (the biggest man on the team at 200 pounds) sustaining a broken nose and having to leave the game entirely. And, subsequently the quarterback and one of the guards sustained what may have been concussions, and only played sparingly the rest of the game.

Then, late in the fourth quarter near the end of the game with the score tied 6-6, Pittsburg drove down to about Mt Vernon's 5-yard line, using mostly running plays, but then scored with their tailback taking the snap from center deep, and lofting a lazy pass to an end out in the flat in front of our defensive halfback, but just across the goal line. The game ended on a sad note for Mt Vernon with a Pittsburg win of 13-6.

Mt Vernon then came back strong during the rest of the regular season with big wins over Sulphur Springs, Bonham and Commerce. These games included strong play by the recovered quarterback and guard, as well as the big tackle who had sustained a broken nose during the Pittsburg game. Only, the big tackle's helmet had been equipped with one of the new fangled "bird cage-like" facemasks that later became common to the present day for offensive and defensive linemen.

### District Champs!

As of the end of the regular season, Mt Vernon had defeated Mt Pleasant but had lost to Pittsburg; Mt Pleasant had lost to Mt Vernon but had won over Pittsburg, and Pittsburg had won over Mt Vernon but lost to Mt Pleasant, resulting in the three teams tying for first place in District play, making them "District Tri-Champs". So, late on the last Friday night of the season after the concluding games had each been played earlier in the evening, representatives of the three tying champion schools met at the Alps Café, located at the intersection of Highways 67 and 271 in Mt Pleasant to decide who would represent the District in the Bi-District playoff. The decision was made by a drawing with Mt Vernon the winner.

### Preparing for the Bi-District Game

Immediately on knowing Mt Vernon would be representing the District our Head Coach contacted our opponent to exchange films of games played during the regular season. Mt Vernon then received films of two of our opponent's games which the Coaches made sure the squad got to view, several times. The usual workout day routine was for the squad to meet promptly at 2 p.m. in a classroom after the daily classes to view the films as narrated by our coaches, then report to the field house and practice field for the daily workout. These workouts were long and hard as usual to try to get ready for our opponent, with them often ending either in the dark or under the field lights.

Mt Vernon had been lucky that season in not having any more injuries than they had, but one day their luck in this regard ran out. A couple of days before the big game one of the wide receivers had his season ended with a broken collar bone.

EPILOGUE: Mt Vernon met the Terrell Tigers in bi-district play which was played on the subsequent Thanksgiving Day afternoon at East Texas State Memorial Stadium in Commerce. Terrell had won the Class AA State Championship the previous year, and were favored by many to win the same State title again.

The game day was sunny and windy with the squad riding to Commerce by school bus, driven by the assistant coach. On arrival at the gate to the stadium dressing rooms the players filed off the bus and clustered around the small "on-loan" Newsom Packing Company panel truck that carried the player

uniforms and gear. During this momentary interval, the head coach glancing down the way toward the opponent team's entry gate casually mentioned that the opponent Terrell team had ridden to the game in a charter bus. This, to which Mt Vernon's quarterback emphatically, exclaimed, "Well, we rode in a school bus!"

Terrell featured a crisp, quick hitting and well-balanced Split-T offense together with a 40-plus squad that allowed mostly two-platooning and sub-stitution with frequent resting of its regulars. Mt Vernon did have a mostly stalwart eleven in their first string but this same eleven mostly had to play both ways. However, Mt Vernon was pretty competitive during the first half of the game with Terrell leading by only 12-0 at the half and Mt Vernon scoring a touchdown during the early second half. But, all in all Mt Vernon was literally outmanned and overpowered in this game, with Terrell winning 46-7. High points of the game for Mt Vernon included many short passes completed by the quarterback from the spread offense. But, as mentioned earlier Mt Vernon had lost one of its wide receivers to injury the week before.

For this bi-district game there was a group of Mt Pleasant players in their black and gold letter jackets there to support the Mt Vernon team led by Roger Durant.

The characters mentioned included: Wayne Pierce, head coach; Robby Campbell, assistant coach; Charles Brown, tackle, who after earning all-District honors went on to play for SMU and the University of Houston, and professional football; Don Orren, the guard hurt in the Pittsburg game, probably was about the smallest on the starting 11, but was named that year to all-State honorable mention; Dalton Banks, the fullback who scored the lone touchdown in the Pittsburg game, earned all-District honors the following year; George Turner, wide receiver, who sustained a season-ending injury just a few days before the bi-district game did recover in time for the basketball season and earned all-State honors in that sport; and Don Meredith, the quarterback, subsequently was named all-District and State several times before finishing his high school athletic career, and went on to play for SMU and play for several years of professional football for the Dallas Cowboys.

Terrell was defeated in the next round of playoffs that year by the Henderson Hornets.

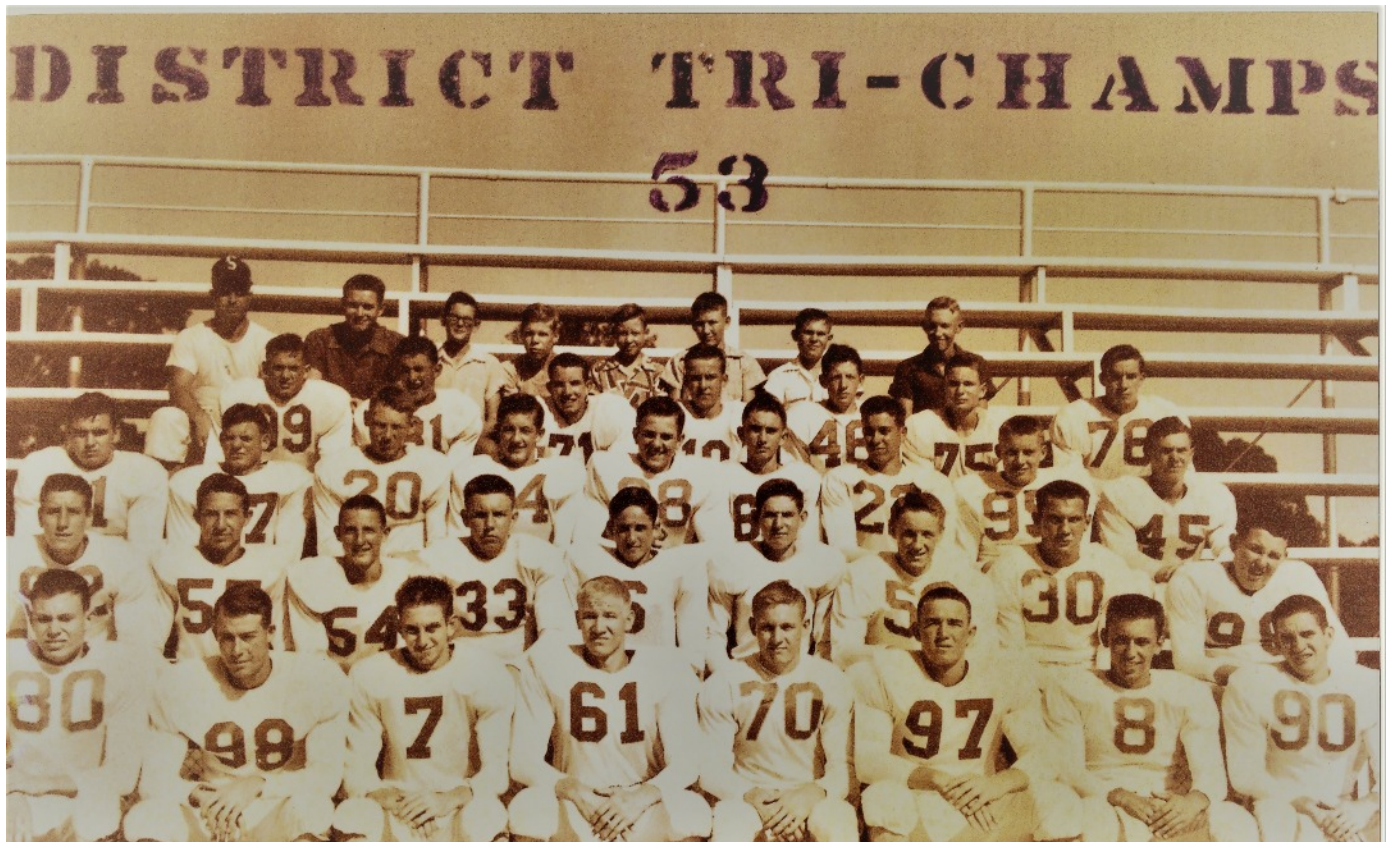
The newspaper publisher was Jim Bass, and the pretty middle daughter of his was Jane Bass.

The field house and large Post-Oak trees were located as part of Old Tiger Field located on Oak Street just off West Main in Mt Vernon. Recently I saw that the big oak trees are still there but the old field house is long gone as only one of our fond memories of wonderful days gone by.

AUTHOR'S NOTES: Recently I read a book by Jim Dent entitled "*Twelve Mighty Orphans*," which chronicles the heroic Fort Worth Masonic Orphans Home high school football teams of the 1930's, who largely dominated Texas high school football during that era and who were known as "The Mighty Mites". I then realized that I actually was involved in a connection between those outstanding Masonic Home teams featured in the book, and the great 1953 Mt Vernon high school Tiger football squad of which I was privileged to have been a member. Thus, I titled this piece "The Tiger Mites".

Reportedly a major motion picture is in the process of being produced based on Jim Dent's inspiring book.

Ralph K. Banks, MVHS Class of 1957  
Austin, Texas



Bottom row, left to right: Jerrall Bryant, Erben Crone, Marvin (Sputter) Maples, W.H. (Dub) Majors, Charles Yates, Charles Brown, Reginald (Reggie) McDonough and George Turner.

Second row back, left to right: Dean Sinclair, Frank Hunnicutt, Larry Wright Lawrence, James O'Neal, Don Orren, Charles Dyer, Bob Rich, Dalton (Toodley) Banks and Jack Birdsong.

Third row back, left to right, Jimmy Jack Stone, Jo Ed Tulley, Douglass McNeely, Jack Clinton, Don Meredith, James Dale Mills, Bob Cody, Donald Mills and Kermit Horton.

Fourth row back, left to right: John Stinson, Jack Jagers, Billy Glenn Miller, Eddy Garretson, Winifred (Wimp) Gandy, Robert Donald (Donny) Morris and Bill Weatherford.

Top row, left to right: Robby Campbell (assistant coach), Wayne Pierce (head coach), Don Campbell (freshman), Daniel S. (Danny) Starr (freshman), Billy Garretson (freshman), Kenneth Raley (freshman), Ralph Banks (freshman) and Robby Davis (equipment manager).

The team went 9-1 in District competition with wins over Clarksville, Mineola, Gilmer, Atlanta, Mt Pleasant, Sulphur Springs, Paris Reserves, Bonham and Commerce, and a District loss to Pittsburg. At the end of the District competition Mt Vernon, Mt Pleasant and Pittsburg were tied for District Champs with each having only one loss in District play. Mt Vernon then won a drawing and advanced to Bi-District play where they were defeated by a score of 46-7 by the Terrell Tigers at East Texas State Memorial Stadium in Commerce on Thanksgiving Day that year. In the succeeding Regional game about a week later, Terrell was defeated by the Henderson Lions.

Most of the freshmen boys are not shown in game uniform in this picture due to a shortage of such uniforms at the beginning of the season. But, by the end of the season Coach Pierce and the team had rounded up enough game uniforms for the freshmen boys, since by that time in the season the team would be ahead of their opponents enough during the last part of a game to get the freshmen into games.

## Leaders of Tomorrow Visit Museums

Fifteen students and their teachers representing Leaders of Tomorrow toured the Cotton Belt Depot, Fire Station Museum and Parchman House Visitor's Center on Monday, December 16th. The 11th grade students are selected by faculty members based on their leadership skills.

December's theme was volunteerism, tourism and economic development. The students also visited volunteer-based non-profit organizations as well as the Franklin County Library, City Hall and Industrial Foundation.

FCHA would like to thank Leaders of Tomorrow for making us a part of their day!



Front Row: Mariska DeBruijn, Cynthia Castillo, Amanda Tran, Peyton Steen, Britney Kenemore, Zane Holland, Blake Hollingsworth, Cody Wagner, MVISD Staff Chassity Morgan

Back Row: Jerald Mowrey, FCHA VP, Dr. Jason McCullough, MVISD Superintendent, Gail Reed, FHCA Office Manager, Savanna Stanley, Emma VanDieden, Hailee Pingatore, Abriana Cardenas, Beth Kellum, Bradley Walker, Morgan Lowery and MVISD staff, Jennifer Sumrow

**BE SURE TO VISIT OUR NEWLY DESIGNED WEBSITE AT**

[www.fchatx](http://www.fchatx)

You will find information about all things FCHA, from information about officers, board members, FCHA properties, exhibits, meetings, places to visit, past editions of our newsletter, books available at our library, and endless archives of historic photos, among many other things.

Many thanks to Luiz Sifuentes for this amazing creation we can all be proud of.

**2020**  
**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**  
**Franklin County Historical Association**  
**P. O. Box 289**  
**Mount Vernon, TX 75457**  
**903-537-4760**

Memberships are based on the calendar year.  
Members joining mid-year will receive all publications for that year.

Name _____	Class of Membership & Dues:
Address _____	Individual—\$15.00
City, State, Zip _____	Family—\$25.00
Phone: _____	Patron—\$50.00
Email: _____	Sponsor—\$100.00

**I would like to receive my newsletter via email. Check here.** \_\_\_\_\_

Indicate your membership class and mail your dues check to:

FCHA, P.O. Box 289, Mt. Vernon, TX 75457

**2020 DUES**

Please fill in the above contact information. Circle membership class.

Dues for 2020 (Includes subscription to bi-monthly newsletter)      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Special tax deductible contribution for operations and maintenance:      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Special contributions may be designated as memorials or honorariums. Please list the name of the person memorialized or honored, and the name and address of the receipt for notice of your donation:

In Memory/In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

Notice to: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

We need volunteers! Could you work an occasional four-hour shift at one of our museums or a few hours in the office? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes, call me to schedule. Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

## FCHA Public Meeting Calendar for 2020

### **January 6, 2020**

6:00 p.m.

Location: Masonic Lodge

Meal: Pot Luck

Hosts: Jim and Christine Ballard, Nathan and Lillie Reves, Randy Cates, Beverly McPherson

Program: Jim Gatewood, History Professor and Author; Bonnie & Clyde and Their Baby Daughter

### **March 2, 2020**

6:00 p.m.

Location: Masonic Lodge

Meal: Pot Luck

Hosts: Joel and Laurie Dihle, Karen Smith, John Bradberry and Cynthia Loftis, Steve Hammons

Program: Matt White: A Natural History of Northeast Texas

### **May --, 2020, TBD**

Civil War Journals Banquet

Journals committee; judges, invitations, sponsors, hosts and greetings; catering

Hosts: Journals committee

### **July 6, 2020**

6:00 p.m.

Location: Mt. Vernon Music Hall

Meal: Sandwiches, beverages provided by FCHA

Hosts: Ken Greer and Frankie Cooper, B.F. Hicks, Jerald and Mary Lou Mowery, Robert S. Long

Program: Shellie O'Neal: "God Bless America" – A World War II Radio Hour

### **September 7, 2020**

6:00 p.m.

Location: Mt. Vernon Music Hall

Meal: Sandwiches, beverages provided by FCHA

Hosts: Jeanne Pamplin, Margaret Sears, Norm and Carol Horn, Lisa Lowry

Program: Paula Altenbaumer: Historical Impersonation: Betsy Ross

### **November 2, 2020**

6:00 p.m.

Location: Cultural Arts Center

Meal: Pot Luck

Hosts: Pat and Sid Hudson, Gail Reed, Jason and Alyssa Burton, Beverly McPherson

Program: Luiz Sifuentes, Using our FCHA Website: Tutorial with Tour of the Galleries