St. John’s: A Forgotten Community

Emily Bowles and Hannah Stewart
Uncovering St. John’s: The People

- How we got started
- Where we began: St. John’s Cemetery
- Genealogy
  - How we found our people
- Continued research
  - Lynching
  - Ku Klux Klan
How We Got Started

From Left to Right:
Brittany Jarvis
Jessica Floyd
Micah Crittenden
Nick Ballesteros
Emily Bowles
Dany Covell
Chris Beal
Hannah Stewart
Freedmen’s Communities

Born out of the horrors of slavery and the promises of emancipation, freedmen’s communities in the state of Texas arose out of the dual desires of recently freed African Americans to acquire land and autonomy from local whites. Typically organized around churches or schools, these communities possessed a unique name, established by the denizens of the community. Freedpeople primarily settled in two differing types of locations: first, on the periphery of towns, as far from the influence of local whites as possible, and second, on unsettled land in rural Texas, which local whites considered uninhabitable. Freedmen’s communities were distinct entities that came into existence in the decade after the Civil War and slowly faded away in the twentieth century with the Great Depression and Second World War. This, combined with racial tensions and economic pressures, pushed many African Americans to urban areas.
THE FREEDMAN'S BUREAU!

AN AGENCY TO KEEP THE NEGRO IN IDLENESS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE WHITE MAN.
TWICE VETOED BY THE PRESIDENT, AND MADE A LAW BY CONGRESS.
SUPPORT CONGRESS & YOU SUPPORT THE NEGRO. SUSTAIN THE PRESIDENT & YOU PROTECT THE WHITE MAN.

IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT THY BREAD.

Freedman's Bureau! Negro Estimate of Freedom!

CONSIDERED IN 1863, 1864, 1865, VOTED THE
NEGRO TROOPS
$300
Each as a Bounty

WASHINGTON,
U.S.A.,
May 1, 1866.

WHITE VETERANS
$100
Each as a Bounty.

THE WHITE MAN
MUST WORK TO
KEEP HIS CHILDREN
AND PAY TAXES.

For 1864 and 1865, the FREEDMAN'S BUREAU cost the Tax-payers of the Nation, at least
Pennsylvania will be about ONE MILLION OF DOLLARS.

GEARY

TWENTY-FIVE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.

For 1866, the SHARE of the Tax-payers of PENNSYLVANIA for the Freedman's Bureau.

CLYMER

is OPPOSED to it.
Life in Pilot Point: St. John’s in Context

In the wake of the Civil War, a group of newly freed men and women from Chambers County, Alabama migrated to North Texas. There, they established a rural freedmen’s community near Pilot Point in Denton County during the 1870s. This community of freedmen maintained the St. John’s church, school, and cemetery during the years from Reconstruction through the Great Depression, when the community seemingly vanished. In the decades since, the church disappeared, the cemetery neglected, and the freedmen were largely forgotten. Recently, however, the Denton County Office of History and Culture has taken responsibility for maintaining the cemetery, which stands today as the sole remaining physical testimony to the free black community that once lived there.
The New York and Florida Limited will be placed in service January 17, 1898.
The True Southern Route to and from California is via El Paso and the Texas & Pacific Railway.
Church Life and Education

Following the Civil War, the Church served multiple functions within freedmen communities throughout the South. Churches, like St. John’s, stood at the heart of the community. Churches served not only as a setting for worship services, but often also functioned as a school and place to host community events such as graduation ceremonies, ball games, and other church-related activities.

Unfortunately, the information for St. John’s School is very difficult to find and as of right now there are only a few documents proving its existence; a map and a photo of John White’s father standing in front of the school. As a result, our team looked into other freedmen’s communities. We looked at overlapping information and patterns to justify what school life may have been like at St. Johns in Pilot Point.
Historical Memory

Between the last known burial in 1938 and the mid-1970s, St. John’s cemetery faded from the collective consciousness of the people of Denton County. We know that in 1975 there was a survey completed of the cemetery by Richard Stevens. We also know that in 1993 there was another survey of the cemetery completed by Phoebe Tarver of the Denton County Historical Commission. More recently, a survey of the cemetery was completed by R.G. Milliken around 1996.

In the 21st century the St. John’s cemetery has garnered newfound attention from those who wish to preserve its legacy and learn about the lives of the African Americans who are buried within its confines. Willie Hudspeth, president of the Denton County NAACP, led a group of volunteers on weekly work trips to begin clearing the underbrush that had reclaimed the cemetery. In 2016, Denton County set aside $20,000 for restoration and revitalization of the cemetery. The allocation of funds by the county government indicates a shift in the collective attention toward historical places in Denton County. Coming nearly a century after St. John’s Cemetery became inactive, this recent attention allows for discourse surrounding the collective memory of African Americans and their communities within Denton County.
Where We Began
Results 1-20 of 1,010,271

To get better results, add more information such as Birth Info and Death Info—even a guess will help. Edit your search or learn more

1 1880 United States Federal Census
   Name: John D. White
   Birth: Abt 1876 Texas
   Residence: 1880 Precinct 2, Denton, Texas, USA

2 1940 United States Federal Census
   Name: John White
   Birth: Texas
   Residence: 1940 Precinct 4, Roanoke, Denton, Texas, USA
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<tr>
<td>Birth Date</td>
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<td>Birthplace</td>
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19. John D. White

John D. White Photograph
WHITE, JOHN D. (1876-1910): John D. White was born in Collin, Texas in 1876 where his parents, Matilda Mewerton White (1848-unknown), and father, John Matt White (1839-unknown), both born in Tennessee, lived before moving to Denton County. John D. had seven siblings; Ellis A. (b. 1855), Mary F. (b. 1859), Sarah D. (b. 1871), Melissa C. (b. 1873), Liza Jane (b. 1878), Allie (b. 1880), and James Manuel (b. 1884). In 1877, tax rolls showed that John D. White's father owned a plot of land worth $450 in McKinney, Texas. The White family lived and worked as farmers on this land. John's father worked as a farmer while his mother stayed at home. According to the 1894 tax rolls, John White did not own land but was a farm laborer for his father in the 1890s on land neighboring the Smith family. John Matt White, his father, passed away at an unknown date in Mustang, Denton County, Texas. By the age of 24, John could read and write English and was not yet married. John D. White passed away of pneumonia on the 26th of February, 1910, at the age of thirty-four in McLennan, Texas and was buried in St. John's Cemetery.

John White's Family Tree
John Matt White and Matilda White are John D. White's parents.

Death Certificate: John White (1910)
On the Death Certificate, unfortunately, John White's birth date is wrong, but the death year is correct.

J.D. White Headstone
Headstone of John D.
White in St. John's Cemetery, Pilot Point.
Continued Research

The four history students on a mission: From left, Emily Bowles, Hannah Stewart, Jessica Floyd and Micah Crittenden. (Dave Lieber/Staff photo)
Pilot Point, Tex., Dec. 29.—Two colored men detained here in connection with the theft of two horses were missing from jail at the roll call. An unsigned note was found on the door of a local newspaper office, which read: “Both Negroes got what was coming to them. Let this be a warning to all Negro loafers; get a job or leave town.” Two colored men disappeared from the Pilot Point jail in a similar manner several months ago and nothing has been heard of them. The jail is located in a backwoods and unguarded at night. Colored people here blame the Ku Klux Klan. Since the men have been kidnaped, scores of men, women and children have left the vicinity. There are not many colored people here and opportunities for employment are scarce.
Review from Last Week

http://omeka.library.unt.edu/s/stjohns/page/welcome
NEGROES DISAPPEAR

Notice to Texas Newspaper Intimates 2 Prisoners Were Lynched

PILOT POINT, TEX., Dec. 14—Two negroes, detained yesterday in connection with the theft of horses, were missing from the jail here this morning. A notice, written on plain paper and unsigned, was found on the door of a local newspaper, reading: “Both the negroes got what they had coming. Let this be a warning to all negro loafers. Negroes, get a job, or leave town.”

The sheriff’s office at Denton has
Lynching at Pilot Point Threatened

Crowd after two negroes in the hands of the officers.

Negroes were taken to Aubrey to escape the crowd—Crowd Followed and Prisoners were brought here.

Jim and Roscoe Gertin
The Second Rise of the Ku Klux Klan
Meet Your Friends --- Ku Klux Klan Day

Wednesday, Oct. 24

STATE FAIR OF TEXAS
Dallas, Texas

PUBLIC INVITED

To witness initiation of the largest class in the history of Klanism.

Spectacular Fire Works—display historicism of the Klan.

Inspirational addresses by speakers of international reputation.

Blasé Band Concert by the Louisiana Ku Klux Klan Bands.

Competitive drills by the Ku Klux Klan and Women of the Ku Klux Klan Drill Teams.

The largest Devil and Eagle Corpse in the world.

Reception and dedication of the Original Klansman of the nation.

You and your friends are invited to attend this day the most wonderful day of your life.
Ties to Law Enforcement and County Officials
FORMER TEXAN NEW WIZARD OF K. K. K.

ATLANTA, Ga., Nov. 30—Dr. H. W. Evans, a dentist of Dallas, Texas, was elected imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan by the imperial klonokation meeting in annual session here to succeed Colonel W. J. Simmons, founder of the organization. The new office of "emperor" was created for Simmons, to which he was elected for life. E. Y. Clarke, acting imperial wizard for the past several months, was named as "imperial giant."

Representatives of the Klan from all over the country are attending the Klan meeting in Atlanta. There is a large delegation from Texas.

The Principles of the KNIGHTS of the KUKLUCKLAN

Will be the subject of an address by W. A. Hamlett, D. D.

on the Court House lawn of DENTON, TEXAS

On the night of August 4, 1922, 8:15 p. m.

The public is cordially invited, especially women and children
DALLAS KLANSMEN UNMASKED CELEBRATE STATE AND LOCAL VICTORIES IN PRIMARY VOTE

United Press Dispatch.

DALLAS, July 22.—Dallas tonight got its first glimpse of the Ku Klux Klan unmasked. Cheering thousands of evident supporters of the hooded and white robed secret order marched the streets in one of the greatest political demonstrations ever staged here following its overwhelming showing in today’s primary election.

Reports reaching here at 11:30 p.m. showed the Klan candidates leading in almost every community.

3,000 In Parade

Approximately 3,000 persons marched in the great parade cheering as they passed thru the streets. Klan candidates in the county races are leading by practically 2 to 1. Dan Harston was elected sheriff and Cox is leading District Attorney Maury Hughes by about 1,000 on incomplete returns.

Klan Wins in McLennan

United Press Dispatch.

WACO, July 22.—Candidates ostensibly supported by the Ku Klux Klan were leading in the McLennan County sheriff’s and county attorney’s races, the two contests in which the Klan was the dominant issue, according to returns from one-third of the county precincts.

Sheriff Bob Buchanan, who was seriously injured when he attempted to halt a Klan parade at Lorena last October, when Louis Crow, local business man, was killed in running behind his opponent, C. S. Farmer, who maintains a lead of about 2 to 1.

Lorena, scene of the October parade and resultant riot, voted 2 to 1 against Buchanan.

Klan Wins in Wichita

United Press Dispatch.

WICHITA FALLS, July 22.—Practically all the candidates in Wichita County endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan are leading. Both candidates for the Legislature from Wichita County endorsed by the Klan apparently have good majorities.

Klan Wins in Port Arthur

PORT ARTHUR, July 22.—The Klan ticket was put into power in today’s primary, both State and county tickets showed.
LODGES

REGULAR MEETING

REGULAR MEETING Denton Klan No. 136 every Tuesday night, 7:30. Members urged to be present.
City of Denton
I.O.O.F. CEMETERY est 1860
Open 6AM - 9PM
Parks & Recreation
How We Remember the Community Today