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Grand Prairie Historical
Organization

Volume XXVI

August 2011

MEETING LOCATION

Our next meeting will be August 18th from 11:30—1pm. It will be held at the GPHO Museum, which is located at 1516 W. Main St., GP, 75050. Please get there early as we will start promptly at 11:30. Lunch will be available for \$10 each. The Brass Bean will be furnishing the lunch. Please RSVP to Angela Giessner (972-262-5151) no later than August 15th if you want lunch.

Speaker: Daniel L. Smith — Bankhead Highway Association

Daniel L. Smith was born in Miami, Florida and has a BS and MS degrees (meteorology) Florida State University. He worked for the U.S. Weather Bureau/National Weather Service (NWS), 1962-2005 (retired). He is published in the *Monthly Weather Review*, the *Journal of Meteorology*, *NWA Digest*, and other professional journals.

He has devoted considerable time to historical topics since retirement. In Florida, the focus of his work has been the state's maritime heritage, with particular emphasis on steamboats of the Ocklawaha River.

His historical research in Texas is focused on the Bankhead Highway - the nation's first all-weather, transcontinental highway, which dates to around 1920. The Texas portion of the Bankhead - from Texarkana to El Paso - comprised roughly one-third of the 3000 mile long Bankhead route from Washington, D. C. to San Diego. Texas Highway No. 1 would be the Bankhead. When names gave way to numbered federal highways, the Bankhead from Texarkana to Dallas became part of US-67, while the Bankhead from Dallas to El Paso became part of US-80. Today, Interstates 30, 20 and 10 closely follow the original Bankhead alignments

As our Museum takes shape, we are looking for donors to help finance some of the costs. The building has just been painted and refurbished which presents an opportunity for someone that would like to have the museum named after their family. We also have rooms within the Museum that can be designated. Let us know if you are interested.

Check out our Web Site! Thank you to Kathleen Andrews for keeping our site up and running. Kathleen did an exceptional job with this site and volunteered hours of her time to make it look fantastic.

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The Grand Prairie Historical Organization and the Grand Prairie Genealogical Society are starting to work together on a few projects. We have some goals in common and working together sounds like a great idea. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Brian Bingham at 214-808-1913 or John Wylie 972-206-2723.

On September 15th at CiCi's Pizza in Grand Prairie, we will start the first in our series of dinners in conjunction with the Genealogical Society. This is a fund raiser, but it won't cost you any more to eat than normal. CiCi's has agreed to give part of their proceeds to our organizations. Mark your calendar now, but more information to follow.



Current picture of the old Bankhead Highway—
Just north of Jefferson - past the Jefferson/Main
split and Loop 12.

Infuriated Bull Knocks Two Traffic Officers Off Motorcycles

Special to The News.

WEATHERFORD, Texas, Aug. 15.—While driving on the Bankhead Highway Traffic Officers Guerry and Thorp Tuesday afternoon were attacked by an infuriated bull from behind. Both were knocked off their motorcycles and received slight bruises. The officers were not aware of the bull until he charged them. After knocking them off their vehicles the bull ceased his attack and ran away.

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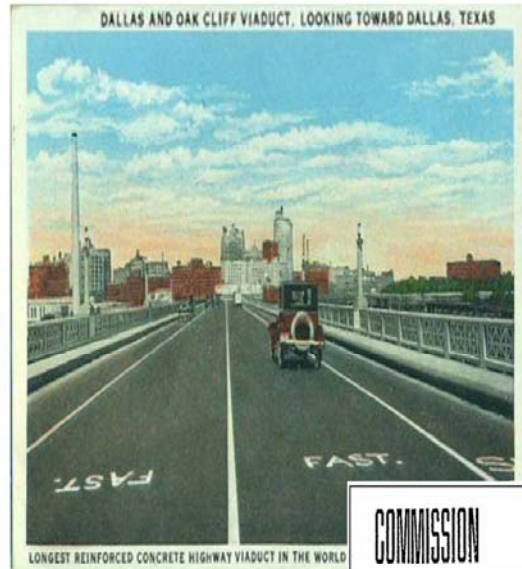
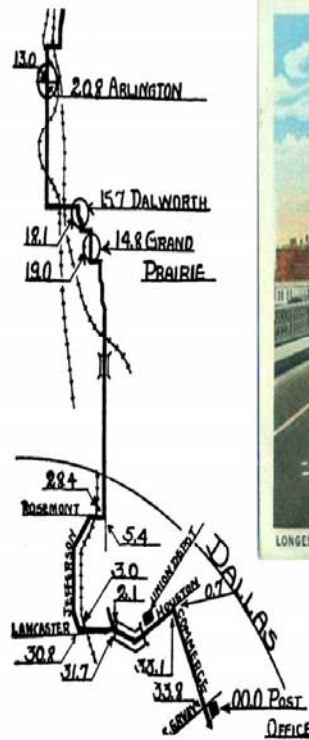
* Deceased

Following the 1922 route

In 1920 the Dallas-Fort Worth Pike was completed to the county line. The 20 foot wide concrete road became Texas Highway 1. The Bankhead followed the route of the Pike west through Grand Prairie. Construction of the road at Chalk Hill was a major effort. The steep hill was called the "Jonah of Automobiles" by local motorists.

Fort Worth Road out of downtown Dallas would have been shorter, but Dunn's 1922 guide followed the more round-about route through Oak Cliff. He may have used that route because of road conditions, but perhaps it was simply to direct tourists across the world's longest concrete viaduct and show them the sights of Oak Cliff.

Grand Prairie was a small town in 1922. Wartime industries in the 1940s helped it grow into today's sprawling city with multi-lane highways on both sides of the railroad. Remarkably, traces of the old Pike (the Bankhead) are still hiding in plain sight at each end of town.



COMMISSION APPROVES PLAN FOR HIGHWAY

Plans and specifications for the Fort Worth-Dallas or National Bankhead Highway were returned from Austin Saturday approved by the State Highway Commission. They went to Captain Fauntleroy of the Federal Road Bureau Saturday for his approval and will then be sent to Washington, after which this county will receive \$116,000 to help build the road.

The plans were sent to Austin Thursday night by R. V. Glenn, consulting engineer for this county. They were returned to Fort Worth in record time, having been approved in less time than has been required for any road project ever submitted to the State Commission. It usually requires from two to three weeks for plans to be examined and approved. Accuracy and completeness caused them to be quickly approved, the Commission notified the Commissioners' Court.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram June 5, 1920



DALLAS COUNTY PART PIKE TO BE REOPENED

Through travel on the Fort Worth-Dallas Pike will be possible again, after a lapse of more than a year and a half, the first of December, District Engineer J. F. Witt of Dallas announced Tuesday. The total cost of the paving from Dallas to the Tarrant County line was in the neighborhood of \$100,000.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram November 17, 1920



This late Bankhead tourist court near Chalk Hill still welcomes tourists.



Chalk Hill road cut, looking west.



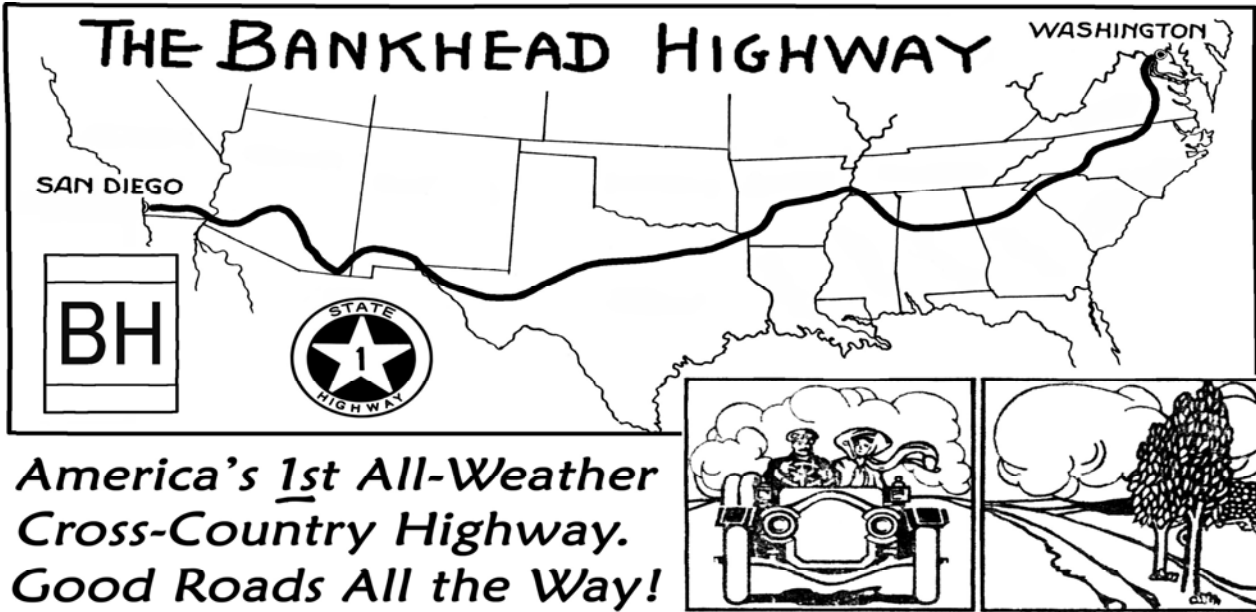
Abandoned Idlewild Road Grand Prairie





Grand Prairie Historical Organization
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 214-808-1913 or bingham@alliance-services.com
 Brian W. Bingham, President

Slate of Proposed Officers for new Term
 President—Janette Skrasek
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 Programs Co-Chairs- Alice Ernest and Myrle Knox
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 Corresponding Secretary Cheryl Dover
 Membership Chair Laurie Johnson



We are building up our library of pictures of Grand Prairie, both old and new. If you have a picture you would be willing to contribute please let us know. We won't keep your picture, just scan it—and you keep the original. Preserving those pictures in our archives are and important part of our mission.