

CARPENTER SCHOOL DEDICATION

March 4, 1979

Speech Given by Russell B. Carpenter

Can you visualize conditions 262 years ago in the early 1700's? Europe was marked by great political and religious and economic disturbances. To escape these conditions thousands of German protestans fled to other parts of Europe. In 1709 33 Thousand left their homes in the Rhine Country for London by invitation of Queen Anne of England. Some 12 to 13 thousand arrived in the summer of 1708. They came to England to be sent to her Majesty's colonies and settle there. In 1717 twenty families, followers of Martine Luther, emigrated to England and camped in London. They were going, with others, to America intending to settle in Pennsylvania, where possibly some relatives and friends were.

There were delays and many of these people died before the voyage ever got under way. Then the ship was blown from it's course and after 15 to 20 weeks finally came to land in Chesapeake Bay. Sailing up the bay the ship anchored at Tappanhannock, Virginia.

A Rev. Philip Slaughter states he would pay the Governor of the Colony, Alexander Spotswood, if Germans settled his land and remained long enough to instruct the young men mechanical trades, he would pay the bill. The immigrants agreed to do this and settled at Germanna. Later this became the county seat of Spotsylvania County (year 1722) and is a landmark in American History. Among the Families in the "colony of 1717" was a Christopher Zimmerman. Literally translated Zimmerman is "Carpenter" in English. Thus was the beginning of the Carpenter Family in America. They helped Martin Luther settle one of the first Luthern Churches in America.

Through deeds, court records and journals the family history has been kept and carefully followed. The man today whom we pay respect to and for whom this school has been named is ROBERT WASHINGTON CARPENTER. He is the sixth generation from Christopher Zimmerman Carpenter who immigrated to America helping to settle the colonies.

R. W. was born in Kentucky in 1832 following his father, Joel's immigration from Virginia. In March of 1852 this young man was 19 years of age when his father died leaving him \$900. Because he had a new bride he heard from relatives and friends who wrote back to the Carpenter's in Kentucky about Plano. R. W. took a stage and came to see this new land.

He told his grandchildren this new land was one of the prettiest spots on earth after the worn out eroded hills of Kentucky. When he rode out northwest along a beautiful meandering creek, Spring Creek, as far as the eye could see were miles and miles of grass even in early spring that reached the stirrups of his saddle. Wild water fowl such as ducks and geese rose ahead out of the water filled buffalo wallows by the thousands. He saw prairie chicken and quail. He even got a glimpse of antelope and deer on his four mile ride. Here was land such as few had ever seen, a land that every foot was tillable as it could be plowed to the very beds of the streams. A land of plentiful rainfall and yearly growing season of nine months---truly a stockman's paradise. These men of Kentucky were stockmen not farmers. Also, the market to St. Louis was only 1,000 miles away where longhorn cattle could be driven to market.

R. W. purchased only enough land for his home, barns, corrals, horse trap and hay meadow. This tract consisted of 1/2 section and was purchased for 50¢ an acre. This strip of land was issued to Texas Revolutionary Soldiers by the Republic of Texas and signed by Sam Houston. The land was open range and plenty for all.

The first requirement for this primitive living was wood and water. R. W. had water, but no timber on his tract so he purchased 30 acres in Rowlett bottom, about four miles to the East. He gave 30 dollars an acre for this small tract and the timber was very valuable in that day and age.

With his land selected he returned to Kentucky and brought with him his young bride Elizabeth Mathews whom he married in 1851. Their belongings consisted of two slaves, two oxen (named Broad and Bright), one wagon, several horses, and a walnut bedroom suite and matching desk were the only articles of furniture brought. The desk and marble top wash stand exists today. They arrived some time in the fall and moved into a spare cabin of the Harringtons while their one room cabin was built that winter.

The children born to R. W. and Lizzie were; seven boys - William Joel, Gipson Edgar, John Henry, Jefferson Davis, Robert Elzie, Benjamin Owen, Edward Albert, and a daughter, Mary Kate, who died in infancy.

Herds of cattle began to build. It is said as huge half-wild longhorn thrived on buffalo grasses, the sage grew as high as the backs of cattle. Community drives were held and the cattle went up the Chisolm and the Shawnee trails by the thousands into St. Louis, where a four year old steer sold for \$10. By 1860 most settlers had sizable herds and began to prosper.

William Gip Mathews, a brother-in-law of R. W.'s, was the finest of craftsmen and helped supervise and erect buildings during this time. Buildings took much time and effort. Logs of elm and bois d'arc were cut out of the bottom land and hauled to the homesite where they were hewed square with axe and adze. These massive timbers were used as framing and joined by mortise and tenon, and fastened with pegs. Nails were precious for they were forged and hammered out by hand. All sawed lumber was hauled from the river port of Jefferson in East Texas. These were sawed in the rough and worked by hand with jack plane and plow plane into the shape and size desired.

During that same winter or following spring, one 20 foot square room and a separate kitchen, with huge fireplace, complete with oven and cranes for cooking were finished, and the family moved in. Also, that winter 40 acres were broken for production of feed for the livestock and family and cotton for clothing. This field is in production today.

There is quite a story of a sod corral that took days to build. Since there was not much raw materials to be found, many settlers tried building with sod. Blocks of sod were cut or plowed up and laid in the manner of brick, all of which grew together forming a living wall of greenery and earth. The Carpenters tried fencing in this manner, and after many weary days of labor, a corral was built. The wall was some 2 or 3 feet thick and 4 feet high, enclosing 3 or 4 acres. When finished, the oxen were turned in. To the surprise of the Carpenters and with much vexation, the next morning upon awakening - the oxen had, in one night, by butting and shoving, demolished the entire project.

Then---came the war between the states which ruined many and in which many lives were lost. Every able man from 15 to 65 served in the Confederate army.

At the start of the hostilities, R. W. Carpenter orgaized a company troop of Calvary at McKinney, Texas. In accordance with the custom of the time and the Confederate Army, he was elected by popular vote to be Captain of his company. So for as long as he lived, R. W. was known as "Captain".

It is said that in all of Texas, the Confederacy could recruit no infantry as these men worked and practically lived on horseback and refused to consider any branch of the service other than the Calvary. All men had to furnish his own horse and side arms.

They fought for four long years under General R. M. Gano and surrendered somewhere in which is now the State of Oklahoma. The few that were left heard a yankee officer repeat Lincoln's famous order "Tell them to take their horses and guns and go home, as they will need them to make a crop".

During the reconstruction days, the lives of the settlers prospered. and more settlers came to this new land. It is told that Captain Carpenter told his first grandson, Bert Carpenter, that some day he might live to see the land worth the fantastic price of \$50 an acre.

When R. W.'s son Will was captured during a cattle drive and later released unharmed by the Indians, R. W. ceased to drive his cattle up the trail in the early 70's. This became a most fortunate move as land values started to soar. First a railroad, the H T. & C. brought market and farm products to this area, and the second, the invention of barbed wire. Plodding oxen broke the prairies. The settlers prospered beyond anything they had ever imagined. Land prices were unbelievable at \$10, \$15 and \$20 an acre. With the breaking of the prairies, the Carpenters and Haggards turned to the production of mules and horses on a large scale.

With their lives returning to regularity - preachers came too. One in particular was Addison Clark. R. W. knew Addison and Randolph Clark during the war in Kentucky. They both now lived at Bonham. Brother Clark would talk along with the work of the Lord and of schools. Even a college of sorts with facilities far beyond the one room schools, that served most of the frontier country. He visited with friends; the Carpenters, Haggards, Bushes, Foremans and others.

These same people established the First Christian Church of Plano and built it in 1873, along with the Bethany Church built in 1876 and Bethany School at the same time. The Bethany Cemetery was built in 1877.

In the new Christian Church a convention of delegates from this church organized Add-Ran College located at Thorp Springs. This is today the great University of T.C.U. Addison Clark was President, Randolph Clark was Vice-President and Captain Carpenter was Chairman of the Board.

Clint Haggard, R. W. Carpenter and Captain Bush loaned Addison Clark \$3,000 to start this institution. Addison's wife paid back this money by giving R.W. a section of land in Johnson County for his \$1,000. Captain Bush was given 320 acres in Collin County and Clint Haggard's children attended college at Add-Ran on his \$1,000 payment.

G. E. (Gip) Carpenter, Captains second son was an early student and was granted three degrees at Add Ran in 1877, the first degree ever given. He came to serve the college as Professor of Languages from 1880-1882.

Three diaries exist today that Lizzie, Elizabeth Mathews Carpenter, compiled. One in old 1856 newspaper and was sewn into the handmade book of cloth as her first diary. The second diary was written on a blank Civil War Roster Book of the Captains. A very faded handwritten journal gives her thoughts and poetry of her friends and life in Kentucky on her departure to Texas dating 1852.

The use of these books and the faded homemade inks reflect the scarcity of paper and the hard times of the reconstruction period of the South. Lizzie, as seen by the pages of these journals, was an exceptional woman for her time, well read and of fine intellect. We are humbly proud of her and the other ancestors mentioned in these diaries. The first 17 years of the First Christain Church was taken from these accounts. In the dim faded writings, people come to life again, who are today names on the survey maps of this county. She writes of babes we know as great grandfathers and grandmothers, all passed away. Of marriages, births, sickness, sorrow and tells of "pinking" the linking for a neighbor's coffin.

She writes of the daily chores of pioneer living' of spinning and weaving, drying fruits, vegetables, cooking, longhorn cattle assembling up the great trail drives, harvesting wheat with cradles. She writes of church, school, of preacher and teacher, soldiers and statesmen as her guests. All came to their door and were welcomed, fed and sheltered. She wrote of her seven little boys.

Some of her entries in her journal:

"Friday, June 22, 1866 - I have just come from the garden where I have been gathering vegetables for dinner. I found roasting ears and nice white head cabbage, the first of the season, my garden is doing finely this season. We have a nice prospect for sweet potatoes. I will have okra and tomatoes in a week or two - well I can't write this morning for I have so much sewing to do and next week I hope to get my rolls so I can get to spinning".

"November 1, Friday, 1867 - This is Friday and pleasant and the wind blows a gently breeze - thus far this fall has been very pleasant, two slight frosts have been about all the intimation of a coming winter, but we know that it is not far away and we must make our preparations accordingly. I am busy spinning and trying to get my jeans filling ready for the loom. I busied myself last week and I fixed green tomatoe catsup. This evening I must put in at the wheel".

"January, 1868 - made Jeff a pair of pants and sewed on several different garments, but didnt finish them. Garments for this week sewn were 2 shirts, 2 pairs of drawers, 1 vest and 1 apron, 1 pair of pants and pinked the trimming for Mr. Leach's coffin."

"This year I have kept a kind of memorandum of work I did through the year - all principal things I have counted and many little things ommited. My following list for 1868: Garments made and cut --136, yards of cloth wove ---55 1/2, comforts quilted --6, quilts quilted ---3, quilts pieced---3, cotton rolls carded for ---4 cuts, yarn spun for knotting--15 cuts, socks and stockings knitted--12 pairs, cut carpet rags for 15 yds carpeting, spooled and warped pieces of cloth---4, straw hats plated and made---1.

Another entry listed made: two shirts \$1.40 1 pair pants \$3.30

sold 7 pounds butter to Mr. Bush - 85¢

8 turkeys sold at McKinney \$7.00

Elizabeth "Lizzie" Mathews Carpenter died in 1882 at fifty years of age. Captain married a year or two latter to Nellie Tipton who bore him one son, Gano. R. W. Carpenter died in 1898, the victim of an accident with a runaway horse. Nellie Tipton lived until 1915. In his obituary the Courier noted that people could not get into the Church at Bethany to hear the services and the hundred, both black and white, viewed the Captain's remains. Addison Clark of Waco gave an earnest talk characterizing the Captain expressing "loyalty" as his most devote character. Captain was a most worthy member of the First Christain Church. He is buried at Bethany Cemetary, less than three miles from this school, between his two wives.

In addition to these forefathers organizing churches and settling the land; these pioneers were instrumental in the first schools and colleges built in this area. Four descendants of Captain's have served a total of 30 years on the Plano School Boards; G. E. (Gip) his son served 2 years;

S.G. (Cyril) grandson served 4 years; Bert, grandson, served 6 years; and Elzie, great-grandson served 18 years.

The R. W. Carpenter School sets on land Gip Carpenter farmed. The Carpenter Homestead is a few miles north of hear. The front psture of the homestead has never been plowed. It is due South of the Dallas North Airport.

In April of 1957 Ben Carpenter and Willie Carpenter, great-grandsons of the Captain compiled a history of the Carpenter Family for it's 100th Reunion. We appreciate their devoted time and effort in gathering this history for the family. One of the most noteworthy guests was the very good friend of Bert Carpenter--Sam Rayburn.

Present today are four GRAND children of Captain Carpenter's. Would they please stand; Lecta Brigham, Frank, Cecil and R. E. Carpenter. I would like now for the decedants of Captain Carpenter, which goes to the 11th generation of Carpenters in America - to stand and be recognized.

Unveiling of the portrait of Captain R. W. Carpenter gives me pleasure in honoring and introducing Gene Carpenter Brinlee, great-great-granddaughter of his, who painted this outstanding masterpiece. Gene was born and raised on the Carpenter Homestead before moving to Ravenna, Texas where she now resides with her husband and two sons. Gene attended school and graduated from Plano High School and also attended T.C.U. studying art. We now present to you the Portrait of Captain Carpenter to be presented to the school.

Today, we the family of R. W. Captain Carpenter are honored to have a school such as this to continue in his name and to teach the young pioneers of today. To the pioneers of yester=year goes our respectful thanks that, because of their strength and courage, their faith and their help of Almighty God, we enjoy the rich Heritage we enjoy today.
